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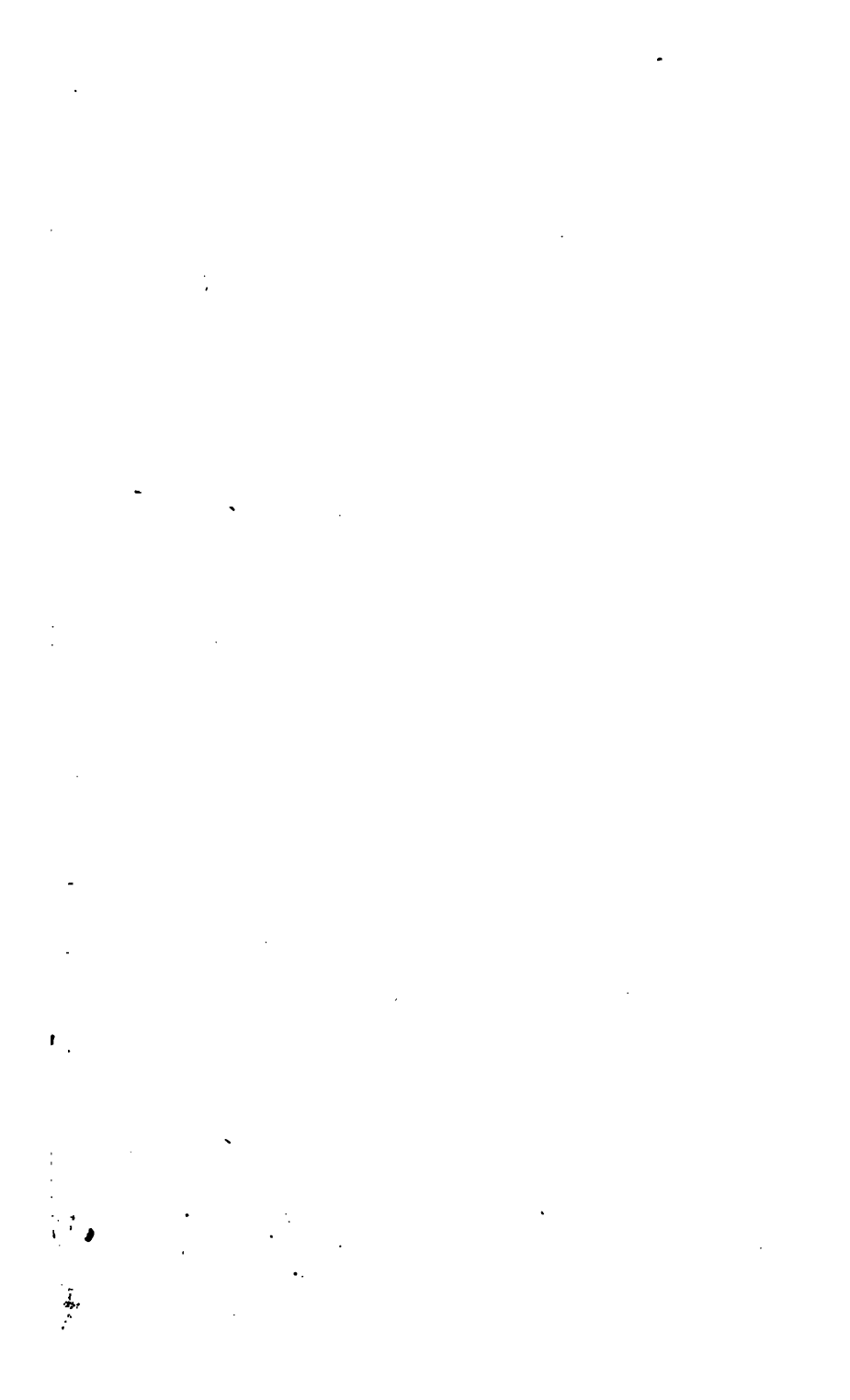
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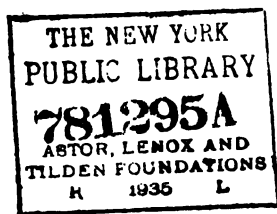
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A L D E R B R O O K .

GRACE LINCOLN.

FOUR AGES IN THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.—EIGHT.

“ THIS will be quite pleasant, after all, mother—quite pleasant. This nice little room is just the place for me. We will train a vine over the window, and my books shall be upon the table close by —”

“ We shall need the table now, my daughter. Your father thinks we can take two boarders, though for my part I see no place to put them,” and the mother cast an anxious, troubled glance about the apartment.

“ Two boarders ! It will come hard upon you, mother.”

“ Oh no, dear, no ! Not so hard, Abby, as upon the poor children. I cannot bear the idea of their being shut up the livelong day—stifled for the want of pure air—work, work, working every moment, till their little limbs are ready to drop off with pain. It is horrible to me, Abby !”

The poor woman, as she spoke, shuddered at the sad picture which needed not the coloring of a mother’s imagination. For a moment the pale lips of the girl trembled, and a tear quivered in her eye ; but, with a strong effort she suppressed the emotion, and replied cheerfully. It was certainly, so said the sympathizing Abby, a hard thing for the poor children to

be shut away from the sunshine ; but she was sure the labor would be light. Mr. Russel promised that , and if it was found in any way injurious to health, or even spirits, a change of some kind must of course be made. " It is only a trial, dear mother," she added, smiling.

" My life has been *all* trials," was the desponding reply , and the mother might have added, that she knew one awaited her harder to bear than all the others.

The life of Mrs. Linden had, indeed, been one of severe trials ; of sufferings and sorrows untold, and scarce imagined by her delicately nurtured country-women ; for, thanks to the chivalrous spirit of America, her women are her jewels. But in the midst of all her trials, Mrs. Linden had never till now despaired. Now want, absolute want, stared her in the face. She had, as she believed, immolated her children ; and a dark unhoping midnight had settled upon her prospects and theirs.

The changes of fortune, common in America, would scarcely be credited by a dweller in the old world. There, men must necessarily be, in a great degree, what they are born and what their fathers were ; but here, each individual takes his destiny in his own hands, and no human power, no law of conventionalism, often still more oppressive, interferes with what he wills. It rests with himself and the great Governor whether he sit down with the honorable of the land, or droop in an almshouse, or crouch, and grovel, and coil himself in a kennel.

Mr. Linden had spent his youth in the city of Boston, where, on the death of his father, he became sole proprietor of an extensive mercantile establishment. When in the full tide of prosperity he married the daughter of an ex-governor of his native state. Soon, however, the fabric of his fortune began to crumble. It was like the melting of a snow toy in the spring, gradually and imperceptibly wasting away until all was gone. This change of fortune could be attributed neither to extravagance nor vice. It was simply miscalculation, mismanagement ; a lack of energy and perseverance, joined with a low estimate of the worth of money, save at the moment when it was needed. Men said, Mr. Linden had no

business talent. He struggled a while, but quite ineffectually, and then he gave up all and removed to another state. In the interior of New York, another effort was made, but it was only to *live* ; and so year after year, year after year rolled on, and found them struggling still.

The father of Mrs. Linden commenced life as a New England farmer. Without well considering the disastrous consequences to his pecuniary affairs, (for the people of democratic America are quite too wise to support the honors they deign to confer,) he accepted several offices of trust, and for one term presided as the governor of his native state. This was the death-blow to his laudable ambition ; for, finding his purse drained, his land, and even the house where he was born, mortgaged, he declined a second nomination. His family consisted entirely of daughters ; and so, though his exertions enabled him to protect them from want, he was quite unable to afford assistance to those removed from his care.

Abby Linden, the eldest daughter of the immigrants, had a very indistinct recollection of large, airy rooms and elegant furniture ; a moment of terror when her father threw himself upon the sofa and groaned aloud, while her mother wept and conjured him to be comforted, was more strongly impressed upon her memory. After events were spread out on her chart of the past in too deep colors to be forgotten ; for, when sorrow came, the child was made the mother's friend and confidante, and from that moment she had never ceased to sympathize, cheer, and even advise. Abby had labored too. With her little straw bonnet tied closely under her chin, and her basket on her arm, she had for years gone every morning to the low, uncomfortable district school-house, and won over the rebellious spirits there to obey her. And then, when night came, she would walk two weary miles ; not loitering under the solemn old forest trees, where it would have been her delight to linger ; but hurrying onward to perform another task with her needle, and again another over her books, before she retired for the night. But things were changed now, and the darling, idolized eldest daughter, the

companion, the friend, the all that a mother's heart could desire to love and rest upon, was gradually but surely going down to the dead. Her bright sparkling eye, her hollow burning cheek, her faltering footsteps, her frail figure, slightly bended, and her thin transparent hand, all told a tale that filled a mother's bosom with anguish. Till now, what with the eldest daughter's little salary and the proceeds of the mother's ever busy needle, despite the father's small bargains, by which he was sure to lose more than he had been able to gain for weeks before, the family had contrived to live in comparative comfort. But now that poor Abby was confined within doors, she could only advise and cheer. The other children were yet too young to be useful. Francis, a bright boy of twelve, and "the little girls," two fair, slender creatures of eight and six years, were all that the grave had left. Small debts accumulated, and finally credit was refused. What could be done? Poor Abby revolved the subject in her mind night and day, and finally she ventured to propose a last resource. She told her mother that factory labor was respectable in this country; indeed none but respectable people could gain employment in these establishments—there was light work in them expressly for children—Frank and Grace were old enough to be employed, and Lizzy might be sent to school. For her part, the doctor had spoken very encouragingly of her case, and while the warm weather continued she might make herself very useful. She would teach Frank and Grace writing and arithmetic, and see that the children's clothes were in order, and possibly she might be able to do a little extra sewing herself. All this had cost poor Abby long nights of weeping; for she had looked on a side of the picture that she did not attempt to describe; but now the proposition was made so cheerfully and confidently, that it received but slight opposition. Indeed, the father, from constant discouragement, had grown almost indifferent; he was sure that fate had nothing worse in store for them; and the mother had been too much accustomed to rely upon the daughter's judgment, to take a fair survey of the subject until it was too late. But when

she looked on the long narrow building, with its dingy walls, and doors which received their ebony blackness from the soiled fingers of the laborers, and thought of her tender children being immured there all through the pleasant summer days she had well nigh preferred beggary—beggary in the open air, the fresh green fields, beneath the broad laughing heavens—to this life-crushing imprisonment. As for Frank, he whispered mysteriously in his little sister's ear of running away; hinted that his mother was a very cruel woman to shut them up so; pouted over his fishing-rod; examined the edge of the little axe so well accommodated to the strength of his arm that he had been able to use it for several years; and then boasted of the mighty exploits he would perform when once free from his mother's control. But Grace had a heart all sunshine. She was a genuine honey-gatherer, and she made all about her sip of the same flowers with herself. There certainly was, she owned, a something very prison-like about the old factory, "but then think of the ten shillings a week, Frank!" she would add, triumphantly.

"Two dollars, you mean, Grace."

"Yes, *you* can earn two dollars, and so will I before long. Oh, it is *so* nice to be earning something for mother and poor sister Abby. Don't you think so, Frank?"

But the first morning that Grace looked into the dark, dirty factory, with its strange machinery, making noises that frightened and almost distracted her; its greasy blackened walls and disagreeable smells, the sunshine of her heart was well-nigh overshadowed. She clung close to her father's hand, avoiding as much as was in her power a nearer approach to the machinery, and looking askance at every pillar, as if she doubted whether anything in that strange place could remain stationary. Grace trembled more and grew still paler as she looked upon the faces of the laborers. So many strangers she had never seen together before, and their faces, all begrimed with dye from off the wool, presented features anything but attractive. As she turned away and clung closely to her father's arm, a boy darted before her, grinning and

throwing himself into various attitudes, evidently on purpose to alarm her.

Oh, that long deep breath as she once more stepped forth into the free air! How it relieved her! And then how her little bosom swelled, as she thought of days, and weeks and months, perhaps years in that same place! She looked up into her father's face as if for a word of encouragement, of hope, but it was darkened with gloom. Grace was frightened, and trembled more than ever. The noise of the machinery — the grating, crashing, thundering, were still in her ears. Again she saw those besmeared faces staring at her, and saw the sickly, yellow light struggling through windows dim with blackness, and oil and filth, and flaunting with the long wreath-like cob-webs, hung with black wool dust, accumulated from that which constantly filled the air, she would soon be compelled to breathe, from early morning to the setting of the sun. That first night of her new abode had cast a spell upon her young, gay spirit; it had scared away its joyousness; and little Grace Linden, finding the bird-like melody of her soul hushed in gloom, might become prematurely old, careworn before her time. Now, she hurried away from her father before any one had seen her; and, crouched in an obscure corner of the unceiled chamber, with her apron thrown over her head, and her face resting on her knees, she sobbed and sobbed, until her little strength yielded to her first overpowering grief, and she found rest in sleep.

A few days found Grace Linden all ready for her labor; a neat cap, fitted by Abby's careful fingers, confining the bright curls that had been accustomed to wander freely about her shoulders, and a brown linen apron, reaching from chin to ankle, enveloping her graceful little figure. The child laughed at the oddity of her own appearance, heavy as her heart felt at the moment; and Lizzy clapped her little hands and outlaughed her sister. Frank, too, joined, half in vexation, half to show that he was not vexed. Abby smiled encouragingly, and crushed with her thin hand a tear that was forcing its way among her long, dark eye-lashes, and Mrs.

Linden turned to the window and concealed her face among the snowy folds of muslin. As for the husband and father, he was none the less to be pitied that he had neither tears nor words. He lacked the self-sustaining power that to his wife and daughter had been the gift of adversity. With a full share of intellectuality, morbidly sensitive, yet fully conscious of his deficiency in all the attributes that make up the *character*, his whole life had been but a continued nightmare dream — a striving *to do*, while a dead numbness seemed to settle upon every limb and faculty. Now, unless something of importance roused him, he seemed in a continued reverie, utterly regardless of everything passing around him. And this was a moment when the whole past, the present, and the dark, dark future, all together, stared him in the face. He could not bear it; and for a whole week did he shut himself in his room refusing to admit even the gentle Abby to console him. At first, Grace thought her work very easy; and the ambition consequent upon learning something new, made her forget to look at the walls that had so much inspired her horror. A long, low table was behind, covered with a cloth, which, by rollers at each end, was kept creeping slowly onward with its light layer of woollen rolls. These, Grace was to take up by handfuls and fasten, one by one, to the ends of those extending down an inclined plane before her, covered in the same manner with a moveable cloth. These rolls, in their turn, were fastened to spindles behind the plane, and a man, with a low forehead, small peering eyes, and a bushy beard quite innocent of clipping, turned a crank, at the same time walking backward, until the wool was drawn out into a thick thread, afterwards to be spun into a finer one. Grace had no opportunity to falter in her task; for the man kept up his steady monotonous tramp, tramp, tramp — turn, turn, turn, until her little head grew giddy, and she found a moment's pause to mend a broken thread, an inconceivable relief. The boy, too, whose grimaces had so frightened her on the day of her first visit, was close beside her, supplying the carding machine with wool; and he seemed inclined to take advantage of

her timidity, thrusting his hideous face, marked as it was with black, before her at every opportunity.

Oh, how her heart leaped when the heavy strokes of the dinner-bell sounded from the belfry, and all the machinery stopped in an instant! And how bewildered she seemed at the strange silence, till some half dozen persons about her burst into a loud fit of laughter! Then Frank came and took her by the hand, and they hurried home together, so delighted with the moment's respite that Mrs. Linden was delighted too, and thought the poor children might be happy after all. But the afternoon—oh, how long it was! Grace thought it would never end. Her little fingers, from constant rubbing their backs upon the rolls to fasten them together, began to bleed; her head felt like bursting, for it seemed as though the machinery was constantly grating against her brain; and her feet ached till she thought the bones had certainly perforated the flesh. That night, poor Abby kissed and carefully bound up the wounded fingers, and took the little feet soothingly between her hands, and talked of brighter days, and sung with her faint, soft voice, little hymns, until, ill able as she was to bear the weight, the child nestled in her bosom, and slept as only those who love and labor can.

Week after week passed by, and though little Grace Linden's feet ached less, her heart ached more. Dick Crouse, the malicious machine-tender, became an object of absolute terror to her; it seemed his delight to torment her by every means in his power; and though the man turning the crank often defended her, it did not lessen her fears. She trembled when he looked at her during the day, and at night dreamed that he was an evil spirit dragging her away from her mother and Abby, to a place of horrible darkness. The trees budded and leaved; flowers bloomed and faded, leaving their places to brighter flowers still; the brooks frolicked and jostled their tiny drops together; and the birds answered back from ten thousand fresh green coverts with startling bursts of gladness. All this passed, and Grace Linden, the darling little woodland fairy, that might have claimed the flowers as

sisters, and the birds as chatty friends and playmates, scarce looked upon the laughing sunlight. True, on a Saturday afternoon, she was free two hours before sunset ; free as the winds of heaven and almost as wild. She laughed, and sang, and shouted, and laughed again, to catch the ringing echo of her own voice, as its music was caught up and prolonged by the bold bluff just over the river. Then she would fling herself upon the turf, and nestle close to the ground to smell its freshness ; and at last, when the hour for returning homeward could be no longer delayed, she would load her little arms with all that was green, and beautiful, and fraught with life, because sister Abby, too, loved the things of summer. But Grace grew pale and thoughtful. A sensation of heaviness, as though neither mind nor body had strength to support its own weight, crept over her. She was sad, as though some great sorrow had passed above her and left an immovable shadow. August came, with its warm, sultry days, and brought no relief. It had now become a habit with Grace to droop her eyelids heavily upon her wan cheek, as though she would thus shut away the pain from her temples ; and whenever her hand was at liberty, to press it against her side. Poor Grace !

One morning, as little Grace Linden happened to glance upward from her work, she observed a fine-spirited boy of some fourteen summers watching her languid motions with an air of interest. He went away on being observed ; but his tour through the cleaner and pleasanter rooms above, was soon made, and he returned to the carding-room. He looked around and whistled a little, and approached the quarter where Grace stood, by studied evolutions. But once there, he could not well be accused of that most *unboyish* of all traits, bashfulness.

"I say, Sliggins," he called out, authoritatively, "why don't you stop that tramp and let this little girl have a minute's rest?" The man at the crank gave a knowing wink with the left eye, and jogged on as before, while Grace cast a look of wonder, not unmixed with gratitude on the daring intruder.

That look was quite enough for the boy, for, without waiting a farther consultation, he marched direct to the carding-machine and threw the band from the wheel.

"There, Sliggins! Look'ee, Mr. Machine-tender, you will be glad of a rest, I dare say, so snuggle down on the wool, and mind you sleep fast, my boy." Dick Crouse leered at Grace over his shoulder, and drawing near, whispered something that made her utter a suppressed scream of terror; then, dancing for a moment with malicious satisfaction, and rubbing his hands gleefully, he betook himself to a pile of wool.

"Rest! Oh, yes, Master Hal, rest never comes amiss to factory folks; but your father moughn't like it quite so well," said Sliggins, good-naturedly, at the same time seating himself on a roll of satinet and resting both elbows on his knees. Without paying any attention to this answer, Henry Russel busied himself with arranging a comfortable seat for Grace; who, without knowing whether to be grateful or not for a display of power characteristic of the *boy*, even though for her benefit, mechanically availed herself of his officiousness.

"Is your name Grace?" inquired the boy, "is that what Sliggins called you?"

"Yes."

"Grace — Grace — Gracey! that's it! that's a pretty nickname! I like nick-names, don't you?"

Grace was not quite sure, for she had always thought nick-names were something bad; but she was certain that *Gracey* was not bad; and then she thought of Abby, and Frank, and Lizzy, and she said "Yes," again.

"Then you must call me Harry, or Hal, or Hank — though I think Harry a little the prettiest for a girl to speak, don't you?"

Again Grace said "Yes."

"Well, I shall be here all the vacation — six weeks; and I'll come down every day and stop the machine, and make Sliggins give you a rest. Would n't you like that, Gracey?"

Grace felt like saying *yes*, again, and blessing this wonderful magician with all her heart; but she remarked, instead, "Mr. Sliggins said your father would n't like it."

"Poh! he likes everything that I do — for, you see, I don't come home but once a year, and then it would n't become him to be cross to me."

Grace thought it would n't become anybody to be cross to such a good-natured boy; and, as this thought was coming up from her heart, (the source of little girls' thoughts,) she could not avoid a glance towards the quarter where the two eyes of Dick Crouse were peering out from the wool — and then she shuddered and involuntarily drew near her new friend. Harry had followed the direction of her eyes, and remarked the shudder.

"I don't think that 's a very good boy, Gracey?"

Grace made no answer, but she stole another glance at the wool-pile.

"Halloo there, fellow!" shouted Harry, "turn your big starers the other way, if you can't shut them."

"Oh don't, don't!" whispered Grace, seizing his wrist in alarm. "He 's a dreadful boy, Harry, and I don't know what he would do if you should make him angry!"

Harry only laughed and shouted still louder, "Do you hear, Blackey?"

Dick dropped his head, and Grace, evidently relieved, interposed: "He can't help getting black in this dirty place; but if he would n't mark that black ring around his eyes, and make up such awful faces, and tell me such horrible stories, too."

"He 's a bad boy, Gracey, I know he is, and I'll tell father all about it — *he* will make him walk straight. Father will employ nobody that is not good; for he says that would make factories in this country almost as bad as they are in England. He shall hear all about this mean Dick Crouse; and then, if the fellow don't look out, he will have to clear. To think of his being hateful to you, and you so nice and good!"

"Oh, no! he don't do anything to me — anything much,

I mean. Mr. Sliggins will not let him strike me any more, and he says he shall not pinch me and pull my hair, but Dick does that so sily that nobody finds him out."

"Why don't you tell?"

"It scared me dreadfully to see him and Mr. Sliggins quarrel, and it makes Dick tell me worse stories when nobody hears him. Oh! I would rather have him pinch me — ten times rather, than hear those terrible things! they make me dream so badly. I wish you tended the machine, Harry — I don't mean I wish you were poor and had to do it, but it would be very nice to have some one here that was kind and good-natured all the time."

Harry thought it would be very nice, too, and almost wished that his father would let him leave school for the purpose. Grace, however, assured him that she would rather have the company of bad Dick Crouse, than that he should do such a thing. To this, Harry responded very generously; and so a half hour passed in just the most agreeable and childish chat in the world. At the end of this time, Harry started up with a loud "hurrah!" threw the belt upon the wheel of the machine; buried Dick Crouse in the wool; gave the roll of cloth a push, which made Sliggins turn a quite unintentional somerset; and then, with a hearty laugh, in which Grace joined quite as heartily, and Sliggins uproariously, took an abrupt departure.

The next morning, true to his promise, Harry Russel was at the factory; but he told Grace that his father was not quite pleased with his stopping the machine, and so he would do a better thing than that. She should teach him to splice the rolls, and he would help her all day. "But why do you work in the factory?" he inquired, looking into her face very earnestly. "If it were not for that ugly cap and this queer apron you would be very pretty."

Grace thought the cap that sister Abby made could n't be ugly, and she said so. Harry admitted that it looked well enough; but he had had a glimpse of the curls peeping out at the side, and they looked much better.

"But why," he continued, pertinaciously, "why do you work in the factory, Gracey? To be sure I think it is about as good as moping in the corner, the way most girls do; but don't you like running in the fields and hunting birds' nests, and would n't you like to see me fish, Gracey?"

Grace could not answer. She was choking with tears; for she thought of the summer previous, when she had tripped it by Frank's side along the borders of the brook, wallowed in the rich clover, made little bouquets of the field daisy and queen of the meadow, and tested fortune by holding the buttercup beneath her brother's chin. Harry's words had recalled all this; and the tears came crowding into her eyes, and her head drooped upon her bosom, until she was startled by an angry exclamation from Sliggins.

"Poh, Sliggins!" said the merry voice of Harry, "never mind if a few rolls did run in! It will rest your arm to mend them. You needn't look so cross, old fellow! Only wait a little, and Gracey and I will keep you jogging!"

As Harry grew more expert in his new business, the two children had more time for talking; and at last he succeeded in extracting from Grace the cause of her working in the factory. He declared it a sin and a shame, that all people, at least all good people, couldn't have just as much money as they wanted. As for Grace, she should have the ten shillings a week, and she should not work either. He would speak to his father about it that very day, for his father was a good man and had oceans of money. Then they would have rare times, for he assured her, in confidence, that the girls at Factory Huddle were just the stupidest set he ever saw; and there was not one that knew what fun meant but her.

This was a happy day for Grace; she had been assisted, and amused, and encouraged; indeed, she had quite forgotten to count the hours, and was comparatively but slightly fatigued. But better than all, Dick Crouse, though there was a world of malice in his eye, had not ventured to play her a single trick since morning, when Harry had duly punished

him for an attempt at one; and for this she was grateful to her new champion in proportion to her former fears.

The next morning Harry Russel appeared full half an hour earlier than on the preceding day, bringing with him a little package of linen, which he said was to be made into an apron like the one Grace wore. His soiled cuffs and collar had given his mother an inkling of his new occupation; but when Grace suggested that it was wrong to come there at all in opposition to his mother's wishes, he laughed outright. "Mother never minds what I do," said he, "unless I get into what she calls bad company. To think of your being bad company, Gracey! She laughs at my tricks at school with the rich boys, but if I have anything to say to the poor ones, she scolds me and teases father about it from morning till night. Oh! it is rare fun to get into company with some of these ragamuffins, and make her believe I like them. But then I suppose it is wrong to plague her; if you think so, Grace, I'll never do it any more, even if she is queer."

Grace assured him that it was very wrong; but still she was sure *she* was not bad company, and pouted very prettily upon the occasion, till Harry assured her he would stay at the factory all the time, just to show that he dared do it. Then she begged of him not to disobey his mother, and intimated that she was not quite sure of its being right for her to make the apron at all.

"Bless your heart, Gracey!" cried the boy, opening his eyes wide in astonishment, "my mother never approves of anything. I am sure I never obeyed her a half dozen times in my life. Why, don't you know she's a *lady*, a real *fine lady*, and not a sensible woman, like your mother, Grace? I'm sure I should always obey your mother."

"But your father, Harry?"

"Oh! father says it don't hurt boys to work at anything. He gave me the stuff for the apron, and told me to get my pretty little Gracey (mind, he called you *my* Gracey) to make it."

Grace doubted whether she should be able to accomplish

such a feat ; but as Harry declared that *his Gracey* must know how to do everything, she promised to try. Poor Grace ! Little did she know what she had promised ; for though she was very well versed in over and over seams, and could, upon a pinch, hem a pocket handkerchief, *cutting out work* was quite out of her line. Little girls are mimic women, and Grace was a complete little girl, with all her sensibilities, the refinements, and pretty little concealments that characterize the sex ; so instead of going to her sister with the apron, and talking frankly of her new friend, as Harry had done of her, she stole away to her chamber and tried to cut one apron by the other ; measured and re-measured, made mistakes and rectified them ; but never gave up the task till she could pronounce the garment in some degree shapely. Then Grace begged a tallow candle from her mother, and plied her needle all alone till far into the night. The next morning she was up with the first grey dawn, singing gaily as she worked ; and right proud was she to fold the apron in her pocket handkerchief and bound away to the factory at the very moment the bell called. Oh, beautiful was the light in the little girl's eyes when Harry Russel appeared that morning, though she tried to look unusually demure ; and beautiful the dimples that *would* trip it across her pale face in spite of her assumed soberness. As for Harry, he ranted in his new dress like a stage player, and stalked about in a manner that Grace thought excessively amusing, quite forgetful of his self-imposed duty, till he saw the little girl press her hand against her side.

Day after day passed by, and Harry was still at his post, as sympathetic, and vigorous, and noisy as ever. Although he had somewhat overrated his influence with his father, when he promised Grace the wages without the work, his complaints of the machine-tender received more attention. Mr. Russel investigated the matter with promptitude ; and, as Sliggins brought several other charges against him, he was at once dismissed, and Francis Linden, as a special favor to himself and sister, was allowed to take his place. On the evening of the day on which Dick Crouse was discharged, as Grace sat

alone in Abby's little room, she was startled by a rustling of the vines at the window. She raised her head and caught sight of the face of her tormenter peering at her through the opening. Grace screamed and started to her feet, while the face kept moving slowly forward until half of the body was within the room. Grace could not scream again, and the boy probably thought he had alarmed her sufficiently; for, shaking his clenched fist, and declaring that he would remember the work of that day forever and ever, and pay her for it, and Harry Russel too, he drew himself back and darted out of sight.

A dear, sweet respite was that vacation for little Grace Linden, and when it was passed, and Harry had returned to school, the fruits of his kindness still remained; for her brother was close beside her, and his cheering voice, rising with difficulty above the noise of the machinery, beguiled many a wearisome hour. But a cloud was destined to eclipse even this faint glimmer of sunshine. The first autumnal frost fell like a blight upon the frail form of Abby; and she drooped with the flowers that she had loved in summer time. Oh, never was there a being more loved, more cherished, more idolized than she who was now stricken! Never were raised prayers more fervent, more wildly agonized than those which broke from the bursting hearts that gathered around her bed; and yet she died. They buried her before the November days came on, deep in the quiet earth, where the bleak winds could not reach her, and where she might rest on her cold, damp pillow, undisturbed by the busy thoughts that scared away her rest while living. Sorrow made the mother sharp-sighted, and she now detected the strong resemblance between her living eldest daughter and the dead. The high fair forehead, with the blue veins crossing it, the large meek eyes, the thin pale cheek, the sharpened chin, all were the same that had once been Abby's; and this same paleness and thinness, and sharpness of outline, had been the marks of disease, immediately preceding the preternatural brightness which had for a long time been effectually deceptive. Grace's ten shillings

could be dispensed with now; the mother did not say it, for it seemed sacrilege to accept of a relief which death had brought; but she insisted on removing back to her dear beautiful Alderbrook, and living as they best could. Behold them, then, in the humble cottage which they had left six months previous; the mother and little girls busy with their needles, Frank apprenticed to a country printer, and Mr. Linden deep in a job of copying, which he had been lucky enough to obtain on his arrival.

CHAPTER II. — EIGHTEEN.

It was a fresh, bright August morning, and a group of young girls had collected in the hall and on the portico of a fine large building in one of our principal cities. There was a wreathing of pretty arms, a fluttering of muslins, a waving of curls, and a flashing of bright eyes, peculiarly fascinating to any one (could such an individual be found) failing to share in the popular disgust felt toward "bread-and-butter misses." A carriage stood at the door, and a fair girl, graceful as a drooping willow, and strangely, spiritually beautiful, equipped for travelling, was yet detained by the gay throng about her.

"Nay, one more kiss, Gracey, dear," said a bright little creature, bending her neck, and putting up a pair of fresh, red lips, with the daintiness of a bird; "don't forget *me*, darling!"

"And remember *me*!" exclaimed another, balancing on her toes to peep over her neighbor's shoulder.

"*Pensez à moi, ma chère amie*," responded the tall neighbor, with an attempt at tune and melody that elicited two or three ringing laughs.

"Good-bye, Gracey, dear!"

"Be a good girl, darling!"

"Be sure you are back the first of the term!"

"Take care, Gracey! don't lose your veil!"

"Nor your heart, either!"

"Keep a sharp look-out for — *you* understand, Gracey!"

"*Regardez!* — now behind the pillar! Look, Grace! he! he!"

These were only a few of the exclamations rising above a Babel of sounds, such as only school-girls — and those very chatty school-girls — can produce.

“ Good-bye ! *au revoir !* ” answered Grace ; and, jumping into the carriage, she wafted back kisses on her gloved hand, answered the waving of handkerchiefs by allowing her own to stream out a moment on the air, and then disappeared around a corner.

And this was Grace Linden — the pale, sad little girl, who had spliced rolls away in the dismal factory — now a beautiful creature, in the full pride of maidenhood. She, who had been deemed an unfit associate for the son of a manufacturer, stood on a perfect equality with the refined and highly-bred daughters of the proudest families America can boast. What change, will be asked, had come over the Lindens ? Had they become suddenly possessed of an immense fortune ? or had some wealthy friend, in compliment to the young girl’s evident superiority, taken upon himself the pleasant task of educating her ? Neither. Mr. Linden made bargains, as usual ; and Mrs. Linden plied her needle ; Frank had become a partner in the printing establishment where he was apprenticed, and was flourishing away, with the least of all little capitals, as a country editor ; and Lizzy was teaching a school of young misses at Alderbrook. Nothing unusual had occurred, but all had been busy — Grace quite as much so as the others. The struggle was not now what it had formerly been ; for all were able to help themselves. Women often atone for their deficiency of muscular power, by making capital of the brain ; and Grace Linden early learned that her hand could be no sure dependence. She therefore followed the example of Abby, and gathered a little school about her ; but she had not poor Abby’s drawbacks, and all her efforts were prospered. Mrs. Linden and Lizzy were adepts with the needle, and Frank, now and then, threw an extra dollar, which economy multiplied to a dozen, into the general fund ; and so the family lived respectably and comfortably. But there had been a time when Grace had learned *to think*, and thought once busied

will never leave the heart till death. Ay, the *heart*—for thence proceed the weightiest thoughts. She was not a *schemer*, but she looked at the present and into the future; she regarded her mother's pale cheek and her father's sad countenance, and resolved to leave nothing undone to render their age easy and happy. It was for this that she had taught, and studied far into the night, and laid by her little savings with almost miserly care, until, at eighteen, she had raised a sum large enough to place her in a boarding-school of the highest character. She entered only for one year, for she had already, by her own unassisted efforts, laid the foundation, and almost built up the superstructure of a superior education. Half of that year had passed; and oh! how happy was the young student to meet her friends, after that first wearisome separation! It was a very humble home to which Grace Linden repaired to spend her vacation, but a very sweet and pleasant one, nevertheless. Holy affections consecrated it; and so happy was Grace that she thought not a moment of her companions, treading on soft carpets and lounging on rich sofas, receiving splendid presents and enjoying costly amusements. Her mother's eye beamed lovingly upon her; her sister's arm encircled her waist; her brother strewed her table with the books marked by his own pencil, and fresh flowers cultivated by his own care; and her father followed her dreamily about, in pride and wonder, and seemed almost happy.

But this was not all. Grace and Lizzy, notwithstanding their humble circumstances, had gathered about them a little company of friends and companions, and these, on the return of the elder sister, flew to welcome her; and walks, and drives, and picnics became quite the order of the day among the young people of Alderbrook.

"An old friend of yours proposed calling on you this evening, Gracey," said Frank, one day, "and mind, my lady, to have on your very prettiest face, and make your very prettiest speeches; for, to my certain knowledge, you will be the first *feme sole* in town to be so highly honored."

"Ah!" said Grace, stitching away on her wrist-band with the most unconcerned manner in the world.

"'Ah!' you would say something more than '*ah*,' if you knew what an object of envy you will be to all the misses and mammas in the village. Here's our mother now; her imagination will be striding off in seven-league boots, the minute she hears the name."

"Mother guesses the name," said Mrs. Linden, glancing up from her work archly, "but she will leave the romancing to younger heads."

"A truce to your mysteries!" exclaimed Grace, "who is this wonderful personage? Come, I am prepared for any announcement. Is he an Indian nabob? or a German prince?"

"You recollect the Russels, Grace?"

"The Russels! yes; or one of them at least. Dear, kind, generous Harry Russel! I shall recollect him as long as I live!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Frank, "that is a good one, Grace! Generous and kind enough is this Russel, for aught I know; but—ho! ho! the boldness of young ladies, now-a-days, is unparalleled! don't you think so, mother? Imagine Grace, with that demure face, saying '*dear Harry Russel*,' of a stately six-footer, so handsome as to turn every girl's head in the neighborhood, and so proud as never to give them even a smile to make amends! Why, Grace, do you think everybody stands still but your own womanly little self? There's no such little boy as Harry Russel, now; but there's a '*Henry J. Russel, Esq., Att'y. at Law, &c., &c.*,' and a fine, noble fellow he is, too."

"I had much rather see the gallant little Harry of yore," said Grace, with a decrease of animation. "Does this Russel visit here?"

"Of course not. He visits nowhere but among his legal brethren; and so you have reason to feel wonderfully flattered, you see."

"But did this proud man, that it seems I shall not like at all, call himself an old friend, Frank?"

"Oh, no! he is too much of a gentleman to make an allusion that he was not quite sure would be pleasant. He is in the habit of coming into the office every day, so we are no strangers; and this morning he made very particular inquiries after you, mentioned having met you once at Mrs. Sommers', when he was there, three or four years ago, and expressed a desire to renew the acquaintance. Of course, I would throw nothing in the way of '*dear Harry Russel;*' and all I have to say now, is, *look your prettiest.*"

But Frank was obliged to say much more; for Grace had a hundred questions to ask about the Russels, of whom she had not heard for the last two years. A year or two alter the Lindens abandoned their scheme of factory labor, Mr. Russel had turned his attention to a different branch of business, and consequently removed to the city of New York. The accidental meeting of Harry and Grace at the house of a mutual friend, some time after, had been extremely embarrassing for both; they were just of that awkward age when we poor foolish mortals learn to be ashamed of frankness and simplicity, and are too unpractised to appear at ease under the mask we choose to assume. Grace now learned that Mr. and Mrs. Russel were both dead; and that the wealth, on which the mother had so prided herself, had passed with them. The son, thus deprived of the fine fortune that he had been accustomed to consider his own, had yet his profession left, and he bent not for a moment beneath the disappointment. Finding, however, that he must hew out his fortune by his own strong will, he resolved to shrink not from severe labor; and he knew that a young man, without money or powerful relations, may occupy a more respectable position, and advance more surely and steadily in a country village than in a large town. It was with this view, and at the urgent solicitations of an old friend of his father's, wishing to retire from business, that he returned to Alderbrook; and even in less than six short months, by his talent, his legal knowledge, his sterling worth, and gentlemanly accomplishments, he had won the confidence

of the oldest and most influential inhabitants, not only of the village but of the county.

Grace thought it very strange that such a distinguished gentleman, as Mr. Russel was considered, should endeavor to seek her out, and she did not believe—not she—but there was a little touch of her old friend Harry about him yet. At any rate, there was no harm, as Frank had said, in looking well; and so our heroine examined her little wardrobe, and spent a half hour in deciding which of her very limited number of pretty dresses would set off her figure to the best advantage. Lizzy said a lemon-colored *battiste*, but Mrs. Linden spoke a word in favor of a plain white muslin, and Grace submitted to her mother's judgment, not a little influenced by the consideration that Lizzy wore white muslin too.

Very lovely was our charming Grace Linden that evening, and very much bent on entertaining her visiter, in whose large dark eyes she detected a lingering resemblance to her friend Harry. At first, Russel seemed surprised at the beautiful vision before him; perhaps he too had forgotten the flight of time, and expected to see his little Grace again. However that might be, before the evening was far advanced, he was evidently reconciled to the change. As for Grace, she succeeded very well in making "pretty speeches," whether she studied them for the purpose or not, but she did not succeed so well in feeling entirely at her ease. She would have been much better satisfied making aprons for the good-natured Harry Russel, than playing the agreeable to the courtly gentleman whose call had been pronounced such an honor. She *did* play the agreeable, however, to the admiration of her sister Lizzy, particularly, who was quite sure "dear, darling Grace" must be the most accomplished lady in the world, and watched her with proud, loving eyes the whole evening.

In a week from this time, Mr. Russel was quite domesticated in the family of the Lindens. He came almost every evening, but he no longer devoted himself exclusively to Grace. Indeed, a kind of reserve seemed to have sprung up between them, which curtailed the strides of the booted imag-

ination amazingly. The attention of Grace was necessarily very much devoted to the young friends with whom she had for years been on terms of intimacy. She sang and played for them, and chatted, and laughed, and danced ; and, whenever she did, she was sure to receive a full share of flatteries and caresses. And then, in the midst of her triumphs, when her lip put on its brightest smiles, and her eye flashed with pleasurable excitement, Russel would look upon her, and think of the pale, sad little girl, that had so strongly excited his boyish sympathy. Could this gay, thoughtless creature be the same ? this pretty butterfly, basking in the sunshine of admiration, as though it were the life of her spirit ? Could this be the Grace Linden that he had longed to look upon again, as something consecrated to all that is beautiful, and good, and pure, though the impersonation of suffering ? Russel might be unreasonable, but he could not bear to see Grace Linden so happy. Perhaps he had hoped again to be her comforter. Be that as it may, he felt displeased, disappointed, almost resentful ; and the more he saw of the lady's singular power of fascination, the more closely he devoted himself to the unassuming, single-hearted Lizzy, and her no less unassuming and still interesting mother. Russel had yet to learn that a settled steadiness of purpose, an earnest spirit, and a deep, changeless, watchful, living love, are not incompatible with light words and gay smiles.

"She has rare endowments," he would say to himself, "and is strangely accomplished for one so young and friendless ; but Lizzy, with her artless ingenuousness, and truthful simplicity, is far more lovely." And yet, while drawing these sage comparisons, Russel's eyes followed their unconscious subject from place to place, as though he deemed that might check her mirthfulness, or throw a veil of homeliness over perfections at which he chose to carp. The truth is, Russel was reading in a strange book, and he had yet the alphabet to learn. With all his lore, the key to woman's nature had not been given him. In the effort to please and render happy, he saw only a fondness for admiration ; the good nature which

smiled at a gross flattery, rather than wound the flatterer, was in his eyes vanity ; and in the sensitiveness which led Grace to forbear speaking of a time when she was the object of his pity, when she was even more miserable than he could well imagine, he read pride and heartlessness. When obliged to acknowledge the unquestionable superiority of Grace over those around her, he lamented the selfish ambition that he believed had led her to labor all her life long for her own advancement, rather than sit down at the simple hearth-stone consecrated by love alone. Such a picture would Russel draw of Grace Linden, meanwhile, shutting his heart against her ; but it always faded before one of her gentle, winning glances, and then he would sit and converse with her by the hour, strenuously resisting every interruption. As for Grace, she saw herself, for the first time in her life, the object of criticism. Russel was studiously polite to her, but she knew that he was not always pleased, and she began to watch herself as she thought he watched her ; until, by natural distrust, she was driven to very humiliating conclusions. All this could not be without its influence on her manners, and she grew capricious. Sometimes she was timid and reserved, sometimes startlingly brilliant ; again gay and trifling to an excess in ill keeping with her thoughtful face and character of pensive sweetness ; but never quite simple and easy, and natural ; it was impossible when Russel was near. She had looked up to Harry Russel confidingly, and acknowledged his superiority by constant deference, when they were first associated ; but now that distance seemed immeasurably increased, and she had learned to fear him. Russel always listened attentively to all she had to say, and seemed pleased to hear her converse ; but notwithstanding the promise of his boyhood, he was no lady's man. He was unskilled in the use of those pretty nothings, which are usually thought to be all important ; his words were full of meaning, and Grace, in listening to him, forgot to reply. Then she was free and natural, and Russel failed not to admire her ; but this often gave way to a strange embarrassment that made her almost awk-

ward. At such times, after he was gone, poor Grace would review every foolish sentence she had uttered, and dwell painfully on some thoughtless act, which she was sure she would not have committed in any other presence. The pleasant vacation that Grace had promised herself grew uncomfortable, and she almost wished that Russel would be a less constant visiter; but when he did chance to stay away, the eyes of Grace were off the door scarcely a moment. Had she offended him, she constantly inquired of herself, or could it be indifference or disgust?

One morning Grace was very pleasantly surprised by a piece of new music from Russel; and she practised upon it all day that she might play it to him in the evening; but when evening came she was dissatisfied with her execution, and refused to play until a long time urged, and then her hand was not firm, and she touched the keys falteringly. Russel seemed vexed — she had played for others, well and often — why would she never do anything that he wished? Grace saw that he was displeased, and her eye moistened; then she recollected that he had no right to be, and, with a very cold, quiet excuse, she turned from the piano, and joining a young friend on the other side of the room, was soon engaged in a very animated conversation. Now and then the sound of Russel's deep, manly voice, made her reverse a sentence or forget to finish one; but nearly a half hour passed before she ventured to look at him. He was explaining to her brother the true bearing of some political question, and seemed deeply interested; but whenever he paused, Grace observed a deep, painful seriousness upon his brow that was quite unusual. "He has something to trouble him," thought the fair girl, "and I, foolish child that I am, have added to his annoyance." Instantly every thought of his superiority vanished — she did not care if he did consider her a simpleton — she was sure she could not appear more of one than when she attempted that show of dignity so little in accordance with her character. He was inquiring for a paper which Frank did not think was in the house; Grace knew where it was, and she glided qui

ely out of the room, and returning, slid it into his hand with a pleasing, winsome glance, which seemed to inquire, "Can we not still be friends?" Russel looked up, surprised and delighted; and that bright, earnest, heartfelt expression, which Grace so well remembered in the boy, lighted up his countenance. And they *were* friends — such very interested friends, that Frank, and Lizzy, and young Edward Sommers, and two or three other mischievous persons, amused themselves at their expense for the rest of the evening.

"You must hear me play that exquisite air before you leave, Mr. Russel," said Grace; "the fault was all in my hand before; I can assure you the will had nothing to do with it."

"And the rare pet you got into afterwards, Gracey?" inquired Frank.

"That was — but I'll not have you for my confessor, with your saucy questions and brusque ways; would you, Mr. Russel?"

Russel thought he should like to propose a candidate for that office himself; and when Grace again crimsoned, and made some remark to her mother to hide her embarrassment, he wondered that he could ever have esteemed her cold and heartless, ruined by her ambition. She sat down to the piano; and now, conscious of his approbation, she played with more spirit and animation than was her wont. Once she cast a quick glance at Russel. He stood in breathless attention. Then her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed, and her beautiful neck arched itself proudly. She finished, and rose from the instrument in conscious triumph — her only thought that she had redeemed her fault. Russel wished she had not played; and Grace easily detected the want of heart in his cold, measured compliments.

"He is not worth the trouble that I have bestowed upon him," thought Grace, as, with pouting lip and swelling bosom, she curtsied him out of the room.

"Ruined by her ambition," thought Russel, all the way home; and all night long it was the burden of his dreams.

As Russel walked home that evening, a drunken man staggered up to him, guided by the light from a low-eaved, filthy grocery, and, slapping him familiarly on the shoulder, poured forth a profusion of half-profane, half-vulgar slang, of which nothing could be well understood. Russel, however, caught the name of Grace Linden; and, swinging the impertinent intruder around, he dropped him by the roadside and proceeded on his way. In the mean time the drunken man crept from the gutter; and, half-sobered by the energetic proceedings of Russel, turned slowly down the street and walked on until he reached the house of Mr. Linden. Here he paused, and gazing up at the lighted windows, seemed revolving a bitter subject. "Yes, it is all owing to her," he muttered, "all; and if I should die on a gallows I would say she brought me there. She did n't like my face, forsooth, and my voice was not so smooth and soft as old Russel's son's, and so I was sent out to starve. Now, by all the powers of hell—" the miserable man, pausing in his malediction, as though his hatred could not be shaped into words, shook his clenched fist toward the window, and then, leaning over the fence, seemed engaged in eager plotting with his own cunning. Now and then, he would raise himself, and gaze up at the house with a dark, fierce glare; but, one by one, the lights went out, till every window was darkened, and then the drunkard stretched himself upon the sod, and slept more sweetly than many a better man.

As Grace Linden looked from her window early on the ensuing morning, she observed a miserable wretch, in tattered garb and with a face distorted by evil passion, regarding her intently from an opposite corner. A feeling of indefinable fear crept over her, for there was something strangely familiar in that malicious expression, which led her at once to think of the boy who had filled her little head with tales of horror, that even now she shuddered to recall. Immediately, the face peering at her through the vines of Abby's little window, with all its dark malignity, was portrayed in living colors; and hastily drawing the little curtain before the window, she sat

down upon her bed-side, and wept long and bitterly, not over the sufferings, but the touching sorrow of the past. That Abby's lot had been *so* dark, *so* sad ! and now they were all so very happy ! Grace, however, soon dried her tears, and tying on her bonnet, stole silently down the stairs, through the garden, up a well-trodden foot-path, and soon she was kneeling on her sister's grave, within the enclosure of the village church-yard.

" And when six months more have passed, you will take up your abode in Alderbrook, I suppose, or, perhaps, favor some brighter clime with your presence," said Russel, one evening, when Grace had been drawing a mimic picture of her return to school ; and as he spoke, he bent his searching eyes upon her, as though he expected to read the answer more in her face than words.

" Oh ! the brighter clime, of course, has my patronage," answered the lady, gaily ; " my next visit to Alderbrook will be a flying one."

Russel's countenance fell. " Your friends," said he, with some bitterness, " will doubtless find the parting easier, since it is for your happiness."

" Yes, for my happiness," echoed Grace, with an ill suppressed sigh.

" On what quarter of the globe, fair lady, will you deign to cast the sunlight of your smiles ?" inquired a slim clerk, in the first and worst stages of dandyism, stepping daintily towards the seat which Grace occupied.

" That is beyond my circumscribed prescience, O most gallant subject mine," answered Grace, mischievously ; " will you cast my horoscope ?"

The flowering dandy seemed a little puzzled. It was evident that he was no lexicographer, and he retreated without attempting any familiarities with the stars

" Then you have not decided as to the future, Miss Linden ?" inquired Russel.

" *Circumstances* must decide me, Mr. Russel," and the lips

of Grace remained apart as though she would have added more, but was for some reason withheld.

"We are all very much at the mercy of circumstances," remarked Russel; "but it seems hardly fitting that one like you should confide your destiny to such a capricious guide."

"It may be so," answered Grace, almost gloomily, "but in that case the world has but a choice few, well-guided.—I must bide my destiny," she added, with more cheerfulness.

Russel was silent. There was evidently a thought he would have spoken, but it was probably something that he had no right to speak, and so he bit his lips and crowded down the temptation. Meanwhile Grace was not quite sure that she had not said too much of herself and her plans; and, confused by his silence, she proceeded, like all embarrassed persons, to say more.

"Not that I anticipate a severer destiny; it is much pleasanter to look for sunshine than clouds."

"And you have no reason to look for clouds," said Russel, with a sad smile; "I predict for you a smooth destiny."

"Then I shall add the weight of your prediction to my own hope," answered Grace, cheerfully; "and, looking upon the whole past, I will venture to believe that Fortune may not so change as to prove herself a severe 'step-dame.'"

"Heaven grant that she may not!" answered Russel, "and yet, success is not always for our best good; I have known its influence on the character to be anything but salutary."

"I hope my character stands in no need of reverses *now*," answered Grace, affected beyond control; "you, Mr. Russel, better than any one else, should know how deeply it has been tried. The future can have nothing too dark, too bitter for me; for the remembrance of *that one gloomy summer*, with the toils and privations that succeeded it, would make all after adversity a light thing. Forgive the allusion to those days—I had thought never to mention them; but the remembrance is with me always; and I cannot separate the generous boy to whom I owe perhaps life—reason, I am almost sure, from—" Grace had been too much excited, she had gone too

far. One thought of the proud, stern countenance of Russel, abashed her ; and, unable to extricate herself, she found relief in an ungovernable burst of tears.

“ Do not separate them, dear Grace, do not try ! ” The words fell upon her ear in low, thrilling tones, that she could scarcely recognize ; and Grace dared not raise her eyes, lest she should discover that they had been spoken in mockery of her emotion.

“ What a stupid couple you are, here in this corner ! ” exclaimed Frank, coming forward, as is the fortune of some people, just when he should not ; “ and tears, as I live ! Between ourselves, Russel, Gracey is getting to be the veriest cry-baby in Christendom. I wish you could convince her that it will spoil her eyes to be so mopish.”

“ Mopish ! ” repeated Russel, abstractedly.

“ Excessively — if you could only have seen her the other evening, just when you were not here to see her — ”

“ Frank ! ” exclaimed the sister, quite thrown off her guard. “ Don’t believe anything he says, Mr. Russel ; his word is not to be depended on for a moment. You know I am always happy — it is my nature to be happy. I could not be mopish if I should try. By the way, Frank, did you bring me the — the book you promised ? ”

“ What book ? ”

“ Why the nice story-book, that was to amuse me while travelling. Frank has a very treacherous memory,” she added, turning to Russel.

The young man started and looked up vacantly. “ Were you speaking to me, Gra — Miss Russel — Miss — Miss Linden ? ” and poor Russel, confounded by his most awkward of all awkward blunders, reddened and looked more confused than ever Grace had done.

“ Ha, ha ! ho, ho, ho ! promising, very ! you are *not* stupid ! ” laughed Frank, brimful of merriment, at the sudden light that broke in upon him ; and, with a very knowing look, and a very low bow, he turned, as he said, to company less

pre-occupied. "Frank is very merry to-night," observed Grace, "he must have been visiting the Ashleys."

A woman's tact, after all, to disentangle the Gordian knot of a double and twisted embarrassment, that, originating in nothing, tends to nothing. The Ashleys afforded a fruitful theme, and they were discussed with a genuine relish for gossip, that had never before been developed in either of our young friends. It may be that there were mingling some home-allusions, and direct personalities; it is certain that there were looks and tones not quite in keeping with the careless words; otherwise, what should place the two young people on the very peculiar footing that they evidently occupied at parting?

The next meeting between Grace and Russel was joyous and cordial on one side, timid, pleased, and gracefully shy on the other. They met in the magnificent old woods, where conventionalism seems a mockery, and heart speaks to heart through the medium of invented words, or the more eloquent language traced by a divine finger on the countenance, and colored from the soul.

Side by side, they walked beneath the grateful shadows, talking in tones low and deep, as if every word had its origin in the inner sanctum of the spirit; and carelessly crushing the bright-eyed flowers, and the large, round dew-drops, scattered in their path-way, as if they had never admired the humble beauties of the woodland. And there Grace unfolded all her plans for the future—those plans that she had never fully confided even to her darling brother; and looked up for approbation, just as she would have looked to Harry Russel ten summers before, only far more confidently. And yet Grace was no longer the child, but the strong-minded, deep-judging, all-enduring woman; beautiful in her simplicity, generous in her unmeasured trustfulness, and strong in those high resolves, which had been the dreams of her childhood, and were now approaching to realities. And now Russel learned the object of that ambition which he had so often censured. Lizzy must be allowed advantages equal to her

sister's; and Lizzy's father and mother must be provided with a comfortable, pleasant home, and find again the happiness they lost in youth. It was a debt she owed, so Grace insisted, for all the care and wearying anxiety which she had occasioned them in childhood; and she would repay it, though grey hairs should come long before her mission could be accomplished. And Grace was surprised to see the dignified, manly Russel, with all his coldness and sternness, display an almost girlish weakness of feeling, at the unfolding of a plan so simple and natural. She wished him to praise her;—indeed, it would have made her sad to think that he did not appreciate the self-denial it would require to separate herself from all she loved, and spend years of toil among strangers. She was no heroine, but a fond, devoted, confiding woman, ready for any sacrifice of her own interests, but in the midst of all, panting for that breath of life to every true woman—sympathy. And yet she saw no cause for the deep emotion which almost unmanned her lover. She knew that she was doing right; that she was acting as the world would call (if the world ever knew it) generously; but little did she know the touching beauty, the deep, tender sacredness, which her character from that moment assumed in the eyes of the hitherto suspicious, though fascinated Russel. It was late before they emerged from that now endeared forest; and then words had been spoken which are *thus* spoken but once; and which never, *never*, even through a long eternity, could be recalled. The solemn stars had witnessed their betrothal; and the green forest leaves, fluttering their fresh lips together, murmured it to each other, and to the wandering breezes; and the spirit of the dead sister, in whose bosom Grace had wept her bitterest tears, carried the holy vows to Heaven, and saw them engraved on angelic tablets.

CHAPTER III. — EIGHT-AND-TWENTY.

“AND you have never heard from him since, dear Grace?”

“Not a word.”

“And yet you feel no resentment?”

"Not resentment, but something of disappointment,—a great deal disappointed, indeed. Few persons in the world would stand a ten years' trial, Lizzy; but I did have full confidence in Russel. However, it has not made me distrustful of my kind; faith and hope are yet strong within me, and even if the past failed, I am quite satisfied with the present. Our home here is a perfect little paradise. Your husband is the most perfect specimen of a man (always excepting one that I have no right to remember) in the world; and 'Gan-papa's little pet, Charley,' the dearest and cunningest little fellow—a perfect Cupid, Lizzy! I am *so* glad you persuaded Sommers to settle near us! As for Frank's wife, I shall love her dearly. She is so patient, and gentle, and amiable! I see that father and mother are very fond of her."

"And well they may be. She is entirely devoted to them and Frank. At first, mother had some misgivings about living with a daughter-in-law, but Mary is so respectful and dutiful, and so companionable withal, that she would not part with her now for the world. But do tell me, Grace, what you suppose could have actuated Russel to treat you in such a manner?"

"Nothing, I think, but time and absence. It is perfectly natural—or would be in any other man; but I was foolish enough to suppose him exempt from all the frailties of humanity. Indeed, I now think him exempt from most of them."

"How strange!"

"What, Lizzy?"

"Why, your talk. Do you know I have been watching your face this half hour, and at last have come to the conclusion that you were never in love?"

"Ah!"

"The truth is, Grace, you are a little too much reconciled to suit me."

"Do you wish me unhappy, then?"

"I cannot say that I do, exactly; but it would be impossible to pity you with that smiling face, and happy way of saying and doing everything. Own, Gracey, that you only

fancied Mr. Russel — that your heart was touched only on the surface."

"It may be so," said Grace, carelessly.

"Good! and now solve a mystery. Why didn't you fall in love with that amiable young Frenchman that you wrote me about?"

"Because my fancy (since you call it that) was pre-occupied."

"The only reason, Gracey?"

"The only reason, I suspect. If I had seen him at eight, or even at eighteen, Russel might never have had the opportunity to exhibit his fickleness."

"But when you ceased hearing from Russel?"

"It made no difference, Lizzy. My vows to him are as binding as though his remained unbroken."

"Oh, Grace! do not say that! His falsehood must not condemn you to a life of loneliness. You would make such a dear, loving little wife! I would forget him just out of spite, if I were in your place."

"And so spite myself. Ah, Lizzy! that is too often the case with us foolish women; but we are spirited at a vast expense. To show a false lover that we can do without him, we sell the remnant of happiness which he has left us, and become martyrs to our own vanity."

"But think of your being an old maid, Grace!"

"Ha! so it comes to that after all! An honorable sisterhood, Lizzy!"

"Grace, a strange notion has just possessed me. Let me see Russel's last letter."

Grace walked across the portico very slowly, and by the time she again stood before her sister, her face wore its usual expression of subdued, but heart-felt cheerfulness.

"Those letters, Lizzy, I have not looked upon in three years. It is not well to test our strength of character too far. They are so, *so* like him!" she murmured, as she again turned away and bent her face close to a little rose-bush that stood beside her.

At another time, it is probable that Lizzy would have observed all this; but the calm, quiet manner of her sister had effectually misled her, and she was only intent on looking into the mystery.

"But tell me, Grace, if you discovered any change in his letters — any coldness or indifference —"

"Oh, no! they were like himself to the last — as he was before I left home for New Orleans — so tender, and generous, and noble! No, Lizzy! his letters never changed."

"Then, Grace, my word for it, that Frenchman, that young De Vere, who loved you so much, is at the bottom of the mischief. I am certain his letters were intercepted."

"Never, Lizzy! at least by De Vere. He is the soul of honor. I would sooner suspect you, or myself, or anybody, of such a crime."

"Then what could it be, Grace?"

"Time and constant occupation — nothing else, I feel assured."

"But is n't it strange, then, that he has never married some one else?"

"Lizzy, dear Lizzy! let us change this subject. We cannot account for all Russel has done; we only know that he is lost to us, and forever. I cannot feel resentment for what I know to be very natural. I have schooled my heart into submission and cheerfulness, and I intend to be very happy with you here — dear loving ones, that you are! But, Lizzy, I have a woman's heart, and I must own to you that it has not yet learned to subdue its many weaknesses. No tears, darling, I do not need them — indeed, I do not, and you must not pity me. I am no love-lorn damsel, but neither am I a stoic. Now for a ride on horseback, and let us forget for a while that there is anybody but us two in the wide world."

Ten years had not passed over the head of Grace Linden without leaving an impress. They had matured her beauty, added polish and dignity to her manners, ripened her intellect, but cast a deep, deep shadow on her heart. In pursuance of an original plan, on leaving school, she had gained a

situation as governess in a southern family. The first few years of her exile from home had been tedious and wearisome; but then she entered the family of the De Veres, and from that time everything was changed. She had spent but a few months with them before she became less the governess than the friend and companion—the daughter and sister. As she intimated to Lizzy, delighted would they have been to make her so in reality, to keep her with them forever; but when Grace gently and truthfully gave her great reason for a refusal, she suffered no diminution of kindness. Political troubles having driven the De Veres from their own country, they had brought with them those republican sentiments which were the fruit of the times, together with cultivated minds, refined tastes, polished manners, and a high-souled generosity that sometimes led to the most noble and chivalric actions. Such spirits have a mesmeric lore by which they read each other's natures at a glance; and this must have been the secret of the strong attachment between Grace Linden and those she served. The residence of Grace in this family was highly advantageous to her; for she mingled with them freely at home, and accompanied them abroad as the daughters' friend; at the same time receiving a salary which enabled her fully to carry out her intentions with regard to her parents.

For five years, almost every act of her life and wish of her heart were known to Russel; and he found time, even in the midst of his high duties, to return her confidence warmly and without measure. Then, as the time for her returning home drew near, he became of a sudden strangely silent. Grace was all-trusting, and, from day to day, from week to week, she busied herself with framing excuses, which, if not satisfactory, yet served the purpose of busying the mind. She did not cease to write; and every day, with a kindling eye and beating heart, did she descend to meet the post-boy at the hall door, returning as often to weep over her disappointment alone. And still did she try to excuse. He was so *very* busy—it was selfish to ask so much of his precious time—then the letters might have miscarried—those southern mails

were so irregular. Yes! they had certainly miscarried, and she would write again. And again she wrote, and again; and her heart grew sick with disappointment. Then came the fearful conviction of his illness — illness among strangers, looked after only by hirelings; for poor Grace had not yet a doubt of his truth. She could not inquire of her friends, for Russel had been for years a popular metropolitan lawyer, and they seldom saw or communicated with him. And Grace, with her usual unselfish consideration for others, concluded that since they were unable to assist her, she would not trouble them. But her fears for his illness were soon dissipated, for she one day saw, in a northern paper, a notice of a fine plea which he had made a few days previous; and his eloquence, his legal learning, and lofty principles were so highly extolled, that for a moment Grace forgot her own troubles in her pride for him. But it was only for a moment. Gradually came the conviction that his success was no longer aught to her; that, however brilliant his career might be, her future must be one of darkness and loneliness — she was studiously neglected and forgotten. Oh! that hour of wild, withering anguish! that dark, deadly struggle of every power within! It was fearful, but Grace was alone, and not a human heart dreamed of the depth of her wretchedness. Then came a sense of utter, utter desolation, when all her treasured hopes were crushed within her bosom; and then a dead, cold calm, as if the life-current had been suddenly congealed, settled upon her heart. Her friends knew that she was unhappy; and, without seeking for the cause, showered upon her the most tender attentions, till Grace was ashamed not to reward their unwearied kindness with success. For their sakes she tried to be cheerful, and the attempt was not altogether in vain. The time came when Grace should have returned to her home in the north, but every motive for returning had now been taken from her. She could not bear that those, whose happiness had been the whole care of her life, should see her changed, and know that grief had so changed her: that would be blotting out the work of her own hands,

extinguishing the light which she had herself created. The De Veres were about to make a visit to the old world, and were urgent that she should accompany them. And Grace consented. Though she had now shut up her inner heart against her other self, and resolved not to be the victim of her own dead hopes, it yet made but little difference where she was, provided the earliest and noblest of her plans failed not through her own sorrows. She wrote to announce her intention of going abroad; and then, for the first time, she spoke of her changed prospects, though, so lightly, as to leave the impression with all that the arrangement had been made amicably and very probably for the good of both parties. When she returned home, four years after, she was so entirely the Grace Linden of other days, that no one would have dreamed a single woe had crept into her heart, a single grief shaded her clear, open brow, or a tear dimmed the lustre of her deep, soulful eye. Months passed before she even made a confidante of Lizzy, and then she only gave her facts, carefully covering up all that might be painful in the history.

"Take care, *cognata mia!*" said Edward Sommers, as Grace playfully pointed her little riding whip at him, while he stood cautioning for the dozenth time his young wife, "take care! your day will come yet, my gay Beatrice."

Grace flourished her whip again, the horses arched their necks and touched the pavement daintily, as if proud of their fair burdens; and, without waiting the conclusion of another caution, which the careful husband was just commencing, the sisters bent their heads with a gay laugh, and tightening the reins, away they flew like two beautiful birds. A shower of rain had fallen an hour before, and whole strings of large liquid crystals clung quivering to every spear of grass, while many a big drop lay snugly nestled in a flower-bell; and every now and then a breath of pure fresh air came sweeping by, and scattered thousands of the bright tremblers from the trees that overhung the wayside. The sky was beautiful and clear, and the air delightfully refreshing; and, as the two ladies reined in their gay palfreys and paused to

listen to the bursts of music issuing from the woodlands, they would catch the gladsome strain, and echo it back with a true joyousness that proclaimed their sisterhood with the spirits of the green wood. On they went, now prancing along under the laden trees and catching the rain-drops as they fell, now entering a green pasture and galloping upon the turf, and again emerging into the high-road, and pursuing their way at a pace more sedate and dignified.

"Grace, do you recollect your old tormentor, Dick Crouse?" inquired Lizzy Sommers, as the two sisters slackened the rein, and proceeded amblingly over a very rough road.

"It would be impossible to forget him," answered Grace, with a slight involuntary shudder. "I never should have dreamed of the existence of such malice if I had not seen it displayed."

"He lives yonder," returned Lizzy, pointing to a low, board hovel, set down in the midst of a potato-patch.

"He!" and Grace involuntarily turned her horse's head.

"What a coward, Grace!" and Lizzy, smiling over her shoulder, cantered gaily forward.

In a moment Grace was beside her. "Now slower, Lizzy, but do not look in the direction of the house; I always have a horrible feeling connected with my thoughts of that man; and there is not a being on earth I should be so much afraid to meet alone. There is something fearfully supernatural in all my notions concerning him, for I once actually believed him an evil spirit clothed in flesh and blood. But how came he here? and how does he live?"

"He haunted the village until grown to manhood, sometimes spending a year or two away, but always returning, until about the time you went south; he then disappeared, and nothing was seen of him for a long time. About three years ago he came to Alderbrook, bringing with him a coarse virago of a woman whom he called his wife, and a child then six months old. They lived in the village, and supported themselves by any little jobs of work which they could get, until about a year ago, when the wife died. Crouse behaved

like a brute upon the occasion, openly rejoicing at his freedom."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Grace, glancing around her in alarm, for now the hut was very near.

"Oh! it was inhuman! but then, Gracey, if you could have seen the poor motherless baby, clinging around his neck — forlorn little thing as it was! you would have respected him some, (you could n't have helped it,) for the child's sake. He could not have been so loved by such an innocent creature, if there were not a little humanity yet within him."

Grace mused a few moments. "Lizzy, I cannot altogether divest myself of the idea that I have injured that man. I was a silly child, scared at my own shadow, and it may be that I deprived him of his only honorable means of subsistence. I believe people are as often driven into crime as reformed by injudicious punishment."

"It may be, Grace, but what better could have been done? He was thoroughly bad, even then, and I have never heard of his performing a good action in his life. The only redeeming trait in his character is an all-absorbing love for his child."

"What has become of the child?"

"Several of the neighbors offered to take it and bring it up respectably; but he ridiculed the idea of not being able to care for his own, and removed at once to this hut. But look, there is some one with him!"

Grace had no need to look, to know that Dick Crouse was near, for she heard a volley of oaths that she firmly believed could issue from no other lips. Before the door of the hut stood a horse, and beside it, Crouse, holding the half-mounted owner of it by the collar.

"Let go!" said the stranger, soothingly, "let go! there would be no use in my staying any longer, and there are a dozen other patients waiting for me."

The two ladies shuddered at the answer, so full of blasphemy, so replete with agony — and hurried on a few steps, then paused and looked back. The physician, for such he

evidently was, had shaken the hand of the desperate man from his collar, and was now trying to free the reins from his maniacal grasp.

"I tell you, Crouse, I cannot help her! You should have called me earlier."

Again the wretched Crouse renewed his oaths and threats, and the physician, evidently out of all patience, was raising the butt of his whip over his knuckles, when a sharp, shrill cry, as of intense suffering, issued from the interior of the hut.

"Come, in God's name, come!" exclaimed Crouse, "*she shall not die!*" And dropping the reins he hurried into the hut, while the physician, relieved, turned hastily homeward. The two sisters, pale with fear, looked into each other's faces, as though each expected the other to speak first.

"Let us go in," said Grace, in a low hoarse voice; "we ought to go; the child is sick, and Doctor Clay said he could do nothing to help her."

"But he is such a horrible man, Grace."

"He would n't hurt us, if he knew we came in kindness."

"How dreadfully he talked!"

"Dreadfully, but the poor child—"

Another piercing shriek interrupted her, and Grace sprang from her horse. Instantly Lizzy followed; and, leaving the two animals to nibble the fresh grass, they turned to the hut.

The first object that met their view on entering the door, was a little child three or four years old, tossing upon a miserable substitute for a bed, in a burning, raging fever; it was flinging its little arms about its head, and rolling from side to side in agony. A few feet from the bed, stood Crouse, with glaring eyes, set teeth, and folded arms, the clenched fingers almost buried in the flesh, and his features distorted to a dreadful expression; nor did he turn his head, nor move an eyelash, until Grace had laid her cool hand upon the forehead of the child. Then he bounded forward like a tiger.

"Away! away! would you kill my child?"

"No! I am come to help her, if I can," said Grace, softly.

"Help her! no! no! *I* know that smooth voice. I have seen Grace Linden before. Help! ha! ha! ha!"

Grace shuddered, and every nerve quivered with irresistible fear; but she passed the hand soothingly over the child's limbs, and made no answer.

"You would help her, as you helped her father. Oh! *you* do good gloriously!"

"Mr. Crouse," exclaimed Lizzy, stepping firmly forward, "if you have any love for your child, you will cease this. We came to do her good, but if we meet with hard words or ill-treatment from you, we leave her to her fate."

Crouse was bending over the bed, as she spoke, and the child put up her little arms as though she recognized him. He was instantly subdued.

"Leave her! Don't, don't leave her! My poor little Nannie! Oh! help her if you can."

"We will!" exclaimed Grace, tears rushing to her eyes, at the sound of his altered voice, "we will do all we can for her."

Lizzy had employed the few moments that had elapsed since her entrance, in taking a survey of the little hut. She found it as she expected, destitute of everything most needed.

"There is no use in staying," she began; but suddenly she paused in fright, for the manner of Crouse became furious; "but we will come back and bring what is necessary."

"No, no, no! You think her grave-clothes are necessary! But she shall not have them yet. A shroud for *her*! *Her* so young? Oh! I meant no suffering, no harm, no wrong should ever come to her! My poor, poor Nannie!"

The wretched man crouched upon the floor, like a wounded dog, and groaned aloud.

"*I* will stay!" said Grace, in a low, half-hesitating tone. Then she added, more cheerfully,

"Hurry home, Lizzy, and send Frank with fresh linen, and — everything that is needed — you will know what. And, Lizzy, ask Frank to bring Doctor Furman; he will help her if anybody can."

"Now, God bless you, Grace Linden!" exclaimed Crouse, in a subdued tone, "if you had made me ten times the villain that I am, God bless you for this!"

"Will you help my sister to her horse?" asked Grace, quietly.

Crouse hurried to the door, but Lizzy recoiled from his touch, and mounted without assistance.

"Ride for life, dear Lizzy!" said Grace from the doorway.

The child screamed, and the answer was lost; for Grace was alarmed at the rough handling of the frightened father.

"I shall need some warm water, Mr. Crouse," said Grace, as soon as the paroxysm ceased, "and then will you please to bring me a tub, and soap, and towels? We must try to cool this terrible fever; poor child! her flesh seems on fire. In the mean time, I will bathe her temples in cold water if you will bring me a basin."

Grace spoke in those calm, quiet tones, which are so puissant in subduing madness, and poor Crouse performed her bidding with the submissive simplicity of a little child. He listened to every word, watched every look, and obeyed the slightest direction to the letter; starting at the child's screams as though every pang had been his own, but only bending his eager eye on her for a moment, and then turning away, as though satisfied that she was in better hands than his. When Grace had bathed poor little Nannie's aching limbs, and smoothed her hair, and beaten up and spread anew her little cot, cooling the linen in the doorway, she laid her down gently; and, fanning her with a fresh green bough which Crouse had brought her, the little sufferer was soon in a troubled slumber. When the miserable father perceived the effect of Grace's care, he crept cautiously to the bedside, and crouching upon the floor, with his elbows resting on his knees, and his chin on both hands, he gazed long and fixedly upon the sleeper. At last he turned to Grace.

"You have wronged me, Grace Linden, and I you; but if you knew all, you would never—" and he pointed to the bed.

"If I have ever had the misfortune to do you a wrong,"

answered Grace, feelingly, "it was unintentional, and I am sorry for it. If it is not too late now to remedy it—"

"It is too late!" growled Crouse, sternly.

"Perhaps it may be done in the person of your child," faltered Grace, timidly; for there is nothing that makes us such cowards as the slightest consciousness of having performed a reprehensible act.

"Ay! save my child, my poor little Nannie, and I will be your slave—your dog, to do your bidding while I live. There is nothing, Grace Linden, nothing, that I will not do for you, if you make Nannie live."

He paused a few moments, and then began brokenly—

"You were a child, only a child, and could not know what you did. It was the fault of others—*they* should have seen that the poor were not trampled on, and driven to theft, and—and every crime. No, Grace, you were not so bad, you did n't mean to ruin poor Nannie, and I *have* wronged you."

Grace thought the man was going mad, and she fixed her eyes on him apprehensively, repeating after him, "To ruin Nannie?"

"Yes! to ruin her—to make us glad to put her in the grave. Oh! I did not hate you without a reason, Grace Linden—but that is passed, all passed, and you will save my own poor little Nannie; you will save her, won't you?"

"If I can; but of what other Nannie have you been talking?"

Crouse looked at her suspiciously. "What other Nannie? What one but her that they drove into the street to make room for you—her that—"

"I never heard of it, Mr. Crouse."

The face of Grace vouched for the truth of her words; and Crouse, after being a little urged, proceeded to explain to her the cause of his original hatred. He was not very explicit; but Grace gathered enough to account for the infinite pleasure Dick Crouse had seemed to take in tormenting her, and to free him, partially, at least, from the charge of unprovoked malice. The boy's parents, being both drunkards, the children

often suffered for the necessities of life, and Dick and his elder sister Nannie, were at last glad to gain situations in the factory of Mr. Russel. It is easy to be believed, however, that they were no favorites, and when Mrs. Linden wished employment for two of her children, it is not strange that Mr. Russel made a vacancy in favor of Grace and at the expense of Nannie. The sister of Dick Crouse was then nearly fifteen, indolent, careless, and vicious; and, as she could not obtain a situation in a respectable family, her course was from that time downward. This tale was told brokenly, sometimes in piteous tones, sometimes with harsh words and a wolfish expression of countenance; but Grace discovered the iron that had been cankering in the man's soul his life long, the ban of society brought by a parent's crimes! Oh! that she had sooner known all this! Even as a child she might have saved a world of wrong. Her heart grew sad as she sat in that gloomy hovel, by the bedside of the dying, perhaps, and in the company of one, not only sinning but sinned against, and, as she now believed, by her own self.

Oh! glad was Grace Linden when her brother arrived with all the little sick-room comforts, prepared by her mother and Lizzy. And glad, too, was she to see the wrist of the sufferer spanned by the fingers of good Doctor Furman; for she knew that if man's skill could avail anything, little Nannie Crouse would yet be saved. The kind physician advised Grace to return home, and leave the patient to his care; but the proposal seemed such a startling one to Crouse, that she concluded to remain and keep watch with her brother during the night. In the morning the fever was somewhat abated, and little Nannie seemed quite rational; for she put up her parched lips for her father's kiss, and passed her hot hand over his face, winding the fingers in the shaggy beard, and trying to win a smile even in the midst of her suffering, till the boldly vicious man was fain to turn away his face, ashamed of his softness. On his return to the village, Doctor Furman engaged a careful nurse to attend upon his patient; and every day Grace and Lizzy showed their kind, cheerful faces at the

hut, until the child was pronounced out of danger. Long before this, it would have been difficult for Grace Linden to recognize her old enemy, Dick Crouse, in the timid, gentle, grateful being, who, she doubted not, would go the world over to save her; and yet, at times, a strange expression flitted across his face, an expression so full of meaning, and such mysterious meaning, too, that Lizzy, and sometimes Frank, thought it boded no good. But Grace was sure the wolf was tamed; and when she spoke of it at home, Sommers laughed, and professed his implicit belief in the veritable history of "Beauty and the Beast." For more than a week before little Nannie's nurse was dismissed, Crouse went out in search of employment, and when he obtained it, set himself to work industriously, saying to all who rallied him on his improved habits, that he had need of money. As soon as the child had recovered, he brought her in his arms one day to Mr. Linden's door, and very humbly begged of Grace to afford her protection and shelter during a short absence. "And," he added, struggling with some almost overpowering emotion, "and if I never return, whatever may chance, Grace Linden, oh, do not let her starve! My poor little Nannie never wronged you."

Grace accepted the charge, and gave her word that the child should be cared for while she lived; and the strange man went away grateful and satisfied.

"Be sure that you do not fail us," said Grace Linden to Mr. Sommers, as she parted from him at the hall door; "and bring Charley. His little eyes will lose none of their sparkle by being kept open one evening."

"You must convince mamma of that," said Sommers. "We careless fathers will believe anything you tell us."

"Well, I shall expect you and Lizzy, if 'leetle pet' is confined to his crib;" and Grace tripped lightly up-stairs to her own room, and, tired with her long ramble, flung herself upon a couch beneath the window. Grace was in no particularly musing mood, but the tide of thought is never still; and numerous and hope-fraught visions came clustering thick around her, though in none of them was there room for self.

Her parents were happy — so happy that their hearts were constantly gushing forth with thankfulness, and their joy was told in words that meant not to tell it — words of the most eloquent simplicity. Then Lizzy, the proud young wife, and prouder mother, could not have admitted another drop into her cup, for it was already brimming over; and Frank, though performing the innumerable duties of a country editor, and swelling his tiny capital by immeasurably small particles, yet found time to be the most heartily gladsome of the whole family. Then Grace thought of Mary, her quiet, gentle, affectionate sister-in-law; and she sprang lightly from her couch, and, opening a drawer, began hastily turning over a bundle of laces.

“Yes! she ought to wear caps,” thought Grace, “pretty little dress caps; they are so becoming to her sweet face. I will make one this very evening.”

The door-bell rang just as Grace was deciding whether the cap should have a little crown to cover the braid, or pass over the top of the head and fall on the neck at the sides, leaving the hair more uncovered.

“Too early for Sommers and Lizzy,” she thought, pulling out her watch.

Old Janet tapped at her door, and put in her head. “Mr. Russel, Miss;” and little Nannie Crouse squeezed in beside her, repeating “Mittah Ushil!”

Grace started, and the whole box of laces fell from her hand.

“*Who* is it, Janet? You have ~~made~~ a mistake! he did not call himself — *that*?”

Janet began to protest that he did call himself *that*; and that she heard just as plain as day; and that (this was said in a lower key, however) some folks could hear a great deal better than some other folks; but the appearance of Frank cut her short.

“Your old flame, Russel, Grace — in the greatest tease to see you — could scarcely say *how d’ye do* to me. But, bless me! how pale you are! Water, Janet! Bring some water! quick!”

Grace put away the proffered cup, and, bending her head upon her cold, white hands, only murmured,

"To come *now*, when I was so, *so* happy! it is too much!"

"Don't go down, Gracey, dear! Don't try!" whispered Frank, drawing near. "There is something here that I do not understand, but you must tell me at another time. Now I will make an excuse for you. I will say you are ill — engaged — anything you like; and tell him to come again, or intimate that you will be always invisible. Don't try to go down, Gracey!"

And Grace thought at first that she would not. Then came all her womanly pride to aid her; and she would not, for the world, that Russel should suspect her of being less indifferent than himself. She immediately arose, and wreathing the long masses of hair that she had allowed to fall over her shoulders, into a knot, attempted to confine it; but the bodkin slipped from her trembling fingers, and Frank was obliged, though somewhat awkwardly, to act the part of tire-woman.

"Now, can you assist me farther, Frank? Put a pin in that lace, close to the top of the dress — how rumpled!"

And Grace passed her clammy hands over the folds of her flowing skirt, to see that each one was in place.

"Never mind, Gracey, it is well enough; and if there was but a little more color in your cheek, I have never seen you so pretty. Now look in the glass."

"I don't care to be ~~pretty~~, just now, Frank; that makes no difference. But if Russel should see me carelessly dressed, or less cheerful than I used to be, he would suspect what, my dear brother, I do not like to have him know — that he has caused me sorrow."

"But he has, Grace! has he not? Oh! why have you not told us this before?"

"It was nothing — was not worth telling. Come now with me, Frank, and leave me at the door."

The young man took his sister's arm in his, but as he perceived she walked tottering, he clasped her cold hand

closely, and wound his arm around her waist. "Grace, my poor sister, this will be too much for you!"

Grace pressed forward. Slowly, step after step, as though joining in a funeral march, they descended the stairs; the strong arm of the brother alone preventing her from falling. Poor Grace! Her heart was the grave of its own crushed, withered, but now intensely alive feelings. They drew near the door, and Frank paused, with his hand upon the latch. 'Grace, let *me* see this man! If his perfidy has occasioned all this, it is fiendish in him to come to you now. As your brother, your best friend and protector, I should and must shield you. Indeed, Grace, you are not equal to this severe task. Let me seek an explanation."

"Never! no! no!"

"Well then, I will not; but don't see him to-night — don't, darling! You are so pale and miserable!"

Grace pressed both hands upon her temples, as if their throbbing would madden her; and then leaned her head against her brother's shoulder and sobbed without restraint. Frank bore her from the door, and, without opposition, guided her back to her room.

"It is *so* long since I have thought of these things, and now they come upon me so suddenly!" she whispered, as he imprinted a kiss upon her dewy forehead. Bitter were the thoughts of Frank Linden, as he turned from his suffering sister to encounter the expected cold eye, and civil speeches of the accomplished man of the world.

Russel was examining a port-folio of pencil sketches as he entered, and the centred light of his fine eye, and the quiet smile lurking at the corners of his exquisitely moulded mouth, bespoke a complacent happiness, strikingly contrasted with the wretchedness he had occasioned. A joyous smile broke from his parted lips and flashed over his whole face like a sunbeam, when the door opened; and then a look of disappointment followed, so deep and heartfelt that Frank was sorely puzzled. He had heard neither side of the story yet. and could only read faces.

"My sister has taken a long walk and is very much fatigued to-night. She wishes me to make her excuses."

Russel looked still more disappointed — somewhat distressed even.

"If she could afford me a few moments — my business is important."

"Another time perhaps : now she is resting and I would not, on any account, have her disturbed."

"She is not ill, I trust?" and Russel looked so anxious, so troubled, so unlike his usually proud self, that Frank's resentment began to give way, and he assured him that she was quite well — stronger and healthier even than when he last saw her. Russel said no more, but drew a small parcel from his pocket, and writing a few lines on the cover delivered it to young Linden, with the expressed hope that it might soon find its way to his sister's hand. When Frank entered her apartment, Grace was seated by the window, leaning her forehead against the raised sash, and gazing upon a retreating figure, now almost invisible in the grey twilight.

"And he will never come again?" she asked, turning suddenly.

"I do not know ; here is something he left you ;" and Frank placed the package in her hands.

Grace clutched at it convulsively and drew it close to her bosom ; and then she gasped for breath, and attempted to tear away the slight fold of lace that shaded her neck, as though it had been that which so oppressed her. Frank was alarmed and was about to call for assistance, but she arrested his design.

"No — no ! I am better now. It was only a momentary struggle and will be the last. I shall be your own Grace again in a few days — as happy as I was before this terrible interruption. He did right to return my letters, and I ought to thank him for it. I suppose there is no danger of his coming again."

Frank thought not, and with a few soothing words — words

so beautiful falling from a brother's lips—he left her to herself.

"It is all over," murmured Grace, "and we are parted forever and ever. Oh, why did he come to disturb my happiness?"

Hour after hour passed by, and still Grace Linden sat in that same position; her white hands buried in her loosened hair, and her cheek pressed closely upon the table before her. Frank came in, and, folding her in his arms, gave her the good-night kiss, and Mary pressed her soft, loving lips upon the aching forehead; but she scarce knew it. Midnight drew near; the candle flickered and yielded up its light; and the moon went down behind the trees, leaving the chamber in utter darkness. Still Grace moved not: it was her hour of utter abandonment. Morning came, and Grace slept—her head resting on her crossed arms, and her face buried in the sleeves of her robe. Again and again there came a light tap at the door, and a pitying face would look in for a moment; but despair has a deep sleep, and this was not easily broken. At last Grace moved, and murmuring her brother's name, awoke. She looked around her with a wild, troubled expression, as of one haunted by the memory of a fearful dream.

"Oh, that it could be a dream!" she murmured, but her hand fell upon a little parcel in her lap, and she remembered all—all her agony and all her hopelessness. Slowly she raised the package and unwound the string, and as a number of letters fell from the envelope, she pushed them from her to the other side of the table, and shaded her eyes from them as though the sight was painful to her. Then she mechanically smoothed the wrapper that she had at first crumpled in her hand; examined the seal, bearing simply the letters "H. R.," and the superscription, his own hand-writing, until finally her eye fell upon some pencilings, and wandered over them at first quite vacantly. In a moment she raised her hand as though she would brush away the haze that obscured her vision, and read, although the strange words half bewildered her:

"I would give the world, dear Grace, to see you to-night, for I have everything to say. But this package will explain all — it contains our intercepted letters. A miserable wretch, touched by your kindness, has confessed the fraud and delivered them up. Forgive, dear Grace, my credulity, though even then I shall not forgive myself. H. R."

The sun had been up nearly two hours, when Lizzy Sommers found her sister extended upon the floor senseless, with the paper crushed in her two hands, and her white lips parted with the first involuntary expression of surprise. She had borne her sorrows well, and but few had even suspected their existence; but the transition was too sudden, too unexpected, and her power of endurance was spent. In a few moments her heart palpitated wildly; a crimson flushed her cheeks; a light broke from her eye, and throwing herself on the friendly bosom of her sister, Lizzy was for the first time made acquainted with all her weakness and all her strength.

Russel found no difficulty in obtaining pardon, for if his rich, manly voice, had pleaded in tones less winning, and spoken words less delicately tender, and if those deep, soulful eyes, had looked into hers with but a tithe of their thrilling earnestness, there was that in the heart of Grace that would have forgiven a greater offence than being convinced of her untruth when there remained no longer a foothold for faith. Grace had not loved Russel for the power which she had gained over him; she had never even dreamed how great that power was, and testing it, by way of learning, she would have deemed degrading to them both. It was his rare intellectual endowments, his high-toned character, his conscious manliness, that had at first won her; and although other and tenderer qualities had conspired to make him dearer than she could have known, had not sorrow unveiled to her her own secrets, she could never have rested so securely in his heart, had that manliness ever bent too low beneath the weight of passion. He had poured out the priceless wealth of a noble heart at her feet — it was a fit offering, and it could not be made richer. His reason, his independence were his own:

hers, as far as their guidance and support were needed, but they were no part of the sacrifice. Perhaps it might have been otherwise had Grace loved less ; men have often yielded up their noblest traits of character to womanly caprice, but never to womanly love.

Russel and Grace had so much to talk of, so many little plans to frame and reframe, and so many more interesting revelations to make, that it was several days before she was in possession of the facts concerning the letters. She had, however, found time to read all his, and had been duly remorseful on finding that his package numbered more than hers, and that several of them bore a later date.

Soon after Russel's departure from Greenville, he had found Crouse in abject circumstances, and, thoroughly conscious of his unworthiness, he had been generous enough to employ him in several petty services out of mere charity. Crouse had nursed the hatred, imbibed in boyhood, for all those who he believed had influenced for ill his fortunes ; and he had brooded over his wrongs in solitude and wretchedness, until they had assumed a most portentous form, and swallowed up every other consideration. The very name of Russel roused the demon within him ; and, but for the bread which he *must* have to keep him from starving, he would have poured forth his pent-up venom without measure. As it was, he contented himself with petty annoyances, which at first were not noticed. One day, however, Russel found occasion to reprimand him severely, and Crouse went away angry ; but driven by necessity, he soon returned, and pleaded his cause so effectually that the young attorney took him into his service again. It was nearly six months after this, that Miss Linden's letters suddenly ceased, and although Crouse was employed as post-boy to and from the office, he had been so faithful in other respects, that he was not even for a moment suspected. His position, too, shielded him ; if Russel had looked for villany, it would have been to a quarter less ignorant and degraded. As for ~~Crouse~~, he had evidently laid no plan for injuring his victims ; but discovering one day, accidentally, to whom the

letters were addressed, he withheld them merely for the purpose of carrying out his system of annoyance. One letter of inquiry addressed to Mr. De Vere, and another to Francis Linden, shared the same fate ; for Crouse had been too long accustomed to read upon Grace's letters, "Care of Monsieur De Vere," not to understand the object of the first, and the other bore the name of Linden. Russel, however, had persevered in his attempts to discover the cause of Miss Linden's unaccountable silence, until she set sail for France. Then he repeated, but in a tone more sad than bitter, (men learn tolerance by living long with mankind,) "ruined by her ambition." He caught one glimpse of her from a position whence he could not be recognized, when she landed in New York ; but notwithstanding the truthful expression that seemed deepened even on her still beautiful face, her easy cheerfulness only confirmed his belief. He thought a noble spirit had been sacrificed ; and he lost all confidence in the truth of human nature, even while he learned more sincerely to pity and forgive its follies.

Crouse threw the letters into an old trunk that had been his sister's, and therefore was preserved with a strangely tender carefulness. He had never thought of them since, except to chuckle in private over his successful villany, until he saw Grace Linden watching by the side of his sleeping child. Gratitude broke up the dark, bitter fountains of hate, and threw a smile upon his heart which had never visited it before. Then he resolved to make all the restitution in his power, though he little knew the injury he had done. And often, when he looked upon Grace Linden afterwards, he exulted in the thought of being able to show, in some degree, his appreciation of the kindness which almost bewildered him. As soon as he was able to earn a little sum to defray travelling expenses, notwithstanding his fear of deserved punishment, he started in search of his wronged master ; and Russel, more inclined to reward him for the present, than to punish him for the past, lost no time in repairing to Alderbrook.

Before the autumn leaves had all fallen, there were rejoicings and weeping in the family of the Lindens ; for the bridal festivities were only the precursor of a sorrowful separation.

"Why not build a little villa, and have one home for us all," said Sommers, shaking heartily the hand of his brother-in-law. "The world you are bustling in will never reward you for half your labors."

"Suppose my labors were of a nature to reward themselves?" answered Russel, smiling.

"Pursue them then, but be sure never to look beyond your own bosom for it. I have but little faith in gratitude *en masse*; I would deal with the individual."

"Ay," said Frank, unconsciously moving his fingers after the fashion of a compositor, "kind deeds do sometimes meet with gratitude when they assume the form of personal favors; but who ever heard of a whole state, or county, or village even, being grateful for the most disinterested services?"

"How now, Frank!" exclaimed Russel, laughing. "What brother editor has been giving you a specimen of his talent at blackguardism this morning?"

"Frank is right, however," answered Lizzy. "Only think of Dick Crouse. By a little kindness, without positive inconvenience to herself, Grace has secured his everlasting gratitude. She might have built a hospital for sick children, (a dozen of them for that matter!) and good, generous-hearted people might have enjoyed its benefits without feeling the least touch of an emotion so pure and unselfish as animated Dick Crouse in spite of his degradation. So much for laboring for the public!"

"True, Lizzy," began Grace, "but —"

"But! No — no, Grace! None of your buts now; we all know what is coming. These young brides always take their cue from their husbands; but wait, Mr. Russel, till she has been matronized a few years — only wait! She will be as positive and opinionated as any of us."

"Well, of one thing I am certain," said Grace, gaily, "as

long as Mr. Russel looks well to one individual, I shall not interfere with his public services, I can assure you."

"Recollect that the individual has a fee to pay, however," answered Russel, "since the public is so ungrateful."

Our newly-wedded friends took their departure at an early day, and proceeded to the city of Washington. Russel was now deeply engaged with public affairs; and Grace entered with a greater zest into his plans, and encouraged his designs, because she found him actuated by true patriotism, and knew that his honorable spirit would never stoop to the petty artifices of manœuvring politicians.

CHAPTER IV. — EIGHT-AND-THIRTY.

It was a scene of rare brilliancy. Large mirrors flashed back the blaze of the glittering chandeliers, and mimicked on their surface the varying features of the crowd traversing the magnificent saloon. There were noble dames in jewelled tiaras and robes of every description, from the royal ermine and glossy velvet, with its rich, heavy folds, to the silver gossamer floating like a misty veil around some figure of rare etherealness. Beauty cast its spell around, and wit and sentiment sped like light-winged, pearl-tipped arrows, flashing from lips all familiar with the elegant artillery. Brave, high-born men, bearing honored titles, (men, who from infancy had looked on scenes of regal grandeur, and become so familiarized with the gay, trifling pageantry, as to act their parts perfectly with absent thoughts,) passed up and down the thronged apartment, and bent their heads, and smiled, and dropped dull words that passed for wisdom, or wise ones that no one appreciated, with a courtly air that disclaimed kindred with all associations below the level of the palace.

"A rare masquerade! every face is as completely *en masque* as though the famous iron one had been put in requisition for all."

So spake an elegant woman, standing in the recess of a window, and half shaded by the folds of crimson drapery

from the gay scene on which she commented. She seemed quite at home amid all that glitter, and yet not like one whose heart was in it very deeply, though in the meridian of her days, and passing lovely. She wore a robe of black velvet, fitting closely so as to display the beautiful contour of her form; and her head-dress was of fleecy whiteness, looped by a single diamond set with rubies, and surmounted by a magnificent plume bending beneath its own rich weight to the shoulder. Her ornaments were few and tastefully arranged. We have said she looked like one whose heart was not with the gay scene in which she mingled; for her large, humid eyes had in them a meek lovingness, and sometimes a pensive abstraction, as though the shadow of serious thought had fallen early upon them and mingled with their light forever. She received gracefully the flattering attentions of the crowd from which the heavy curtain had not been able to shield her; for beauty is a born queen and counts her vassals everywhere; and, the wife of the American ambassador (such was the rank of the lady we have presented) was beautiful enough and accomplished enough to command no little share of admiration, even if her position had been less distinguished.

"You leave us early, Mrs. Russel," remarked a gentleman who had just elbowed his way through the crowd in time to hear the lady give directions concerning her carriage. "It would be worth the while of some of our court geniuses to spend their wit in inventing some fascination that should keep you with us beyond the magic *one hour*."

"Nay, do not attempt it, my lord. I am already quite bewildered by such an array of splendor, and it is only to save my poor republican brain a total overthrow that I fly the field while I may."

"Ah! if that be all, come with me, lady. Yonder is a delightful alcove, where a few choice spirits—"

"Ah! my lord! the danger is not always in the broadest blaze. I am but a novice in all these enchantments and my only safety is in flight."

"That means, lady bright, that you have conned the law

of mercy. But when your fair republic deigns to drop a choice star among us, we like not that it should be veiled."

The lady bent in graceful acknowledgment, and the conversation proceeded more gaily, until Mrs. Russel's carriage was announced to be in readiness; then his lordship, carefully wrapping her cloak about her, handed her to a seat within, bowed his head almost to her gloved hand, drew up the glass, and the carriage whirled away. In a few moments the lady of the ambassador was at her hotel. She tripped lightly up the broad stair-case, and flinging cloak and hood into the hands of her half-sleeping maid, with a bright smile which many a weary belle whom she had left behind might have envied, passed onward to an inner apartment. A night lamp stood burning on a marble table; and, as she came near, her foot touched some light substance on the floor. It was a child's slipper, tiny enough for the foot of Titania herself; and, as the mother clasped it in her jewelled hand, there was a dewiness in her soft eye, that told how touchingly dear to her was everything hallowed by connection with her heart's treasures. She paused and bent over the couch of a fair sleeping girl, parted the bright curls from her forehead, and gazed fondly on the exquisite chiselling, then pressing her lips upon that, on the closed eyes and rose-bud mouth, turned lingeringly, and proceeded to the little crib beyond. It was the nestling place of Cupid himself. The round, rosy face looked out from its golden ambush of curls, with almost its waking roguishness of expression; and the fat, white arms were clasped determinedly over a little whip, the most petted, because the newest of his playthings. Those dimpled arms received many a fond kiss before they were enveloped in the folds of the night-dress; and the little whip was removed as carefully as though it had been the choicest of treasures. Then the mother bent again over the fair boy, and while her eyes rested lovingly upon him, her heart went up to heaven with all those holy aspirations which often shed their halo on the path of men when the spirit that breathed them has gone to its rest. As the lady emerged from the nursery she was

met by her husband, and they returned to her dressing room together.

"You made a masterly retreat to-night, Grace," he said; "now if I only had half your assurance, I should be as grateful as grateful can be. Oh, how I pity those poor ladies that must stay and mope to the end of the chapter!"

"And how they pity people so little *au fait* to the ways of the world as we are! Why, only last night, I overheard a lady duchess remark of your charming wife, 'poor thing! how *new*!' and all because she turned in disgust from a very disgusting scene at a card-table."

"And were you not very much shocked, Grace?"

"Of course, it was a very shocking thing, but I could not resist the temptation of turning to assure her grace that it was a defect which *years* would remedy. She is as much ashamed of being *old* as though it were a crime."

"And you of course knew the sensitive point by intuition, and touched it in a most lady-like manner. You are a true woman, Grace. Who would once have thought of 'my Gracey's' ever tilting with these gossiping court ladies? Fie! fie! It is ill-natured of you."

"It ought to please you, Harry; it proves that I am not *new*. But truth to tell, I am sick myself of this constant sharpening of wits never over bright. I am afraid they will be worn out before I have my own fireside again to use them by. If you had not promised that your public career should end with this embassy, I verily believe, Harry, that I should run away from you, and nestle down in a certain quiet nook away in the green woods of New York."

"You are not so very miserable here, Grace?"

"Miserable! oh, no! I can afford to go and play my part in such a great farce every day, since I may come home to you and the children; and it suits me very well indeed, since I know it is not to last."

"And what think you, dear Grace, of those ladies, who have neither husband nor children to go home to? that is,

those who have both, but scarce see them from week's end to week's end."

"Oh! they are the initiated — born fine ladies. You know I am a butterfly so late from the chrysalis that I have some very contracted notions clinging to me — notwithstanding my fine wings," she added, glancing at the magnificent plume that had formed her principal head ornament for the evening.

It will be seen that our old friend Grace was yet unchanged. Prosperity had not turned her head, nor a mawkish sentimentality stepped in to supply the place of heart. She had no interminable flood of murmurs to drawl forth against the follies that surrounded her, no repinings, no peevish fretfulness; but on her pillow she did picture a charming little retreat, close beside a little village, in which Lizzy and Lizzy's children figured largely; and a darling old lady, smilingly receiving the homage of loving hearts, occupied the foreground. Her own transformation, instead of serving as food for vanity, amused her with its strangeness; and philosophy itself — Diogenes in his tub, and Epicurus in his sensual elysium — might equally have envied the cheerful equanimity with which a fair American dame could mingle in the gayeties of one of the gayest European courts, keeping meanwhile close in her heart the little domestic paradise that she had loved beyond the seas. Grace Linden (we like not to change the name) twined jewels in her hair, fastened the brooch and clasped the bracelet, and thought no more of them; but there was a plain gold ring that she always looked upon with earnest, sometimes with tear-dimmed eyes. When no one was near — not even husband or child — the homely ornament was often pressed long and fervently to her lips; she would not have bartered that simple ring for the whole court's wealth of diamonds; it had once encircled the pale finger of her sister Abby. Rich, costly vases, filled with the choicest flowers, made the air of her apartments heavy with perfume, and rare plants wooed the sunlight in her recessed windows; but in the midst of all she forgot not to write to her brother Frank: "Do not take, as you threatened, that

pretty eglantine from the window that was mine the last summer I spent at home. It was just scrambling up the third pane then, and you must not let it grow higher, or I should never know it. And plant the sweet peas across the little patch down by the currant bushes. I have watched the bees by the hour, glancing about them like lost specks of sunshine, and then plunging among the bright leaves with a hearty boldness that made the robbers quite fascinating. Do not change anything, Frank; you cannot make better the dear, dear spot, and I must find every violet and marigold in its place when I come home."

Two years had passed. A light, simple, airy mansion had risen behind an avenue of native forest trees, close by the unpretending home of the Lindens; and the young lawyer who had commenced his professional career in our small village some twenty years before, was now its most honored citizen. It was a mild autumn evening, and the three families, as was their wont, had gathered in the little parlor, more dear to all than any other, because more particularly associated with the hopes, and fears, and loves of other days. Half buried in a large cushioned chair, in the corner, sat Mrs. Linden, a very little bent and a good deal wrinkled, with her snowy locks parted smoothly on a brow as serene as a summer evening, and her sweet mild eyes wandering from face to face, in maternal fondness. Close by was her husband, dandling another little pet, that had taken the place of Charley, on his knee, and amusing the company, from time to time, with the self-same anecdotes (so the old lady asserted) that he had told at her father's table during the days of his wooing. Two lovely women, in the noon of life, occupied each an ottoman close beside a work-table, and as one pared with her scissors a little from the neck of a muslin collar, she would lay it on the other's shoulders and smooth it with her hand, and then remove it to her knee again, dropping, from time to time, those artless remarks which make such a poor figure in the telling, but weave many a golden link in the chain of love. Near to these, a placid matron, a

year or two older, was leaning over the shoulder of a fine boy engaged with his pencil, and talking in a soft whisper of spoiled eyes and aching heads — things so preposterous as to set the large, mirthful orbs, at which they particularly pointed, in a dance of glee. The village clock was on the stroke of nine, when the family party received an accession. The pet sprang from grandfather's knee to father's arms, begging to be allowed to sit up just a little while longer; a larger, firmer hand began guiding the pencil of the embryo artist; and the manliest figure of the three bent over the arm of grandmother's rocking-chair, and listened to her with the most respectful tenderness.

"What is that you were just saying of my lady — Crinkum-Crankum — jaw-breaker, Grace?" inquired Frank, tossing the baby within an inch of the ceiling. "You had better look to your wife, Ned Sommers, or all this foreign trash will quite run away with her reason."

"Oh, yes!" returned Sommers, quietly, and still guiding the hand of the young artist. "I expect no less; I am prepared for any extravagance, even to a livery."

"I should be obliged to put it upon you and the children, then," answered Lizzy; "for I think you gave your last 'help' a holyday week, this morning."

"You had better be upon your good behavior, all," said Grace, "or we will get up an establishment in right princely style, and press you into the service. There is Frank, calls himself a capital whip, and Mr. Sommers would let down the steps with superlative grace, I dare say."

"Frank," inquired Russel, with a twinkle in his eye, and a mischievous curl at the corners of his mouth, "did I ever tell you the story of your gracious sister and the footman of ——"

"Harry!"

"You see she don't like me to expose her follies."

"Oh, tell! Let us hear! Give us the story, by all means!" exclaimed three or four voices.

"Did she mistake him for his master?" inquired Frank.

"Not exactly, but —"

"Now, Harry!" and Grace rung the bell violently.

Small things are matters of mirth where hearts are merry, and the laugh against poor Grace had not had time to subside, when a sad little face was thrust in at the door.

"Nannie, bring 'Mittah Ushil' a pie — a whole one, mind, for he is near starving. Excuse me, Mary; I should not presume to play mistress of the house, but in an extreme case like this. Try that apple, Harry. It may serve your turn till the pie comes."

"I am sorry to see you so discomposed, Grace," remarked Russel, with provoking coolness; "but since you so earnestly desire it — since," and here he glanced archly at his brothers, "since it is perfectly natural that you should desire it, we will put the story over till another evening."

"What is it, Grace?" whispered Lizzy.

"Oh, a foolish thing. He makes half of it, and it was ridiculous enough to begin with. A silly fellow managed to get a fine joke upon me. It was nothing at all — but if Frank should hear of it, I should have no peace."

"Nannie looks sad, poor child!" remarked Mary. "She has been telling me to-day that her father is in trouble again."

"That fellow is incorrigible!" said Russel.

"What has happened to him?" inquired Grace.

"He is confined in the county jail, as a vagrant," was Mary's reply.

"I do believe he might be made to reform, if proper means were taken. Nannie came to me to-day, with streaming eyes, and said, if the gentlemen would but procure his release this once more, she would coax him to be good and industrious. She was sure he would n't drink any more, when he saw how badly she felt — and it was all the drink, she knew it was. Her father was too kind to do wrong when he was in his right mind. I wish something could be done."

"Something must be done," said Grace, earnestly. "We know the good that is in Dick Crouse better than police-officers, and a seat at the table beside Nannie, in your kitchen, Mary, would do more to reform him than all the jails in

the county. You will see him, Harry, in the morning, will you not?"

"If I could be as sanguine as you and Mary. However, the poor wretch must not be given up. We shall be obliged to allow him another trial—a half-dozen more, very likely."

"If you could get upon some plan, Harry, to employ him, and have him under your immediate care—"

"It would be a somewhat troublesome care, Grace."

"I mean, keep him where he will believe you have a constant interest in him. Then I might take pains to drop a word to him, now and then, which would have some influence. I can't believe that he is past hope yet."

"I believe," said Sommers, "no man is past hope, as long as proper means are taken to reform him."

"Then if the *means* be all, consider Dick Crouse a useful citizen hereafter; for with such a superabundance of *means* as we have here, neglecting him would be a greater sin than any he ever committed."

"If means were all, there would be few vicious people within the sphere of your influence, Grace," exclaimed her husband, with affectionate pride. "At any rate, Sommers, we will give your theory a trial, and if Grace fail—"

"She will not fail," returned the brother; "such as she never do."

"Good! And now, Ned, as a kind of a reward for that handsome compliment, you shall have the story of the footman. Don't 'oh, Harry' me, Grace; I will leave the embellishments for another day. You must know that a certain nobleman whom we met abroad, had a servant so much given to his cups, that he could not be trusted. He was a good, honest fellow, and a favorite withal, and so every means had been used to reform him that could be devised, but without success. The worst of it was, he had an aged grandmother and blind sister entirely dependent on him; and when in his sober senses, he would plead their cause so eloquently that it was impossible not to be moved by his entreaties. At last, however, his master became exasperated, and refused to keep him

another day. Grace happened to be a witness to this scene, and became a sort of sponsor for the fellow."

"That is all, Harry; only he never became intoxicated again."

"Oh, if you could have seen him, drunk as he was, blubbering away on her — not *hand* but *foot*! We all laughed —"

"Ah, Harry! All those pocket-handkerchiefs were not hurried out so suddenly to cover nothing but a laugh. The truth is, there were tears in more eyes than mine; and well there might be, for the poor fellow's gratitude would have stirred up the very stones to feeling."

"I never saw a scene more ludicrously pathetic, and what with weeping and what with laughing, the drunken footman had the honor of producing quite a sensation. But it seems that Grace was not altogether satisfied with this demonstration, and so —"

"You are too bad, Harry!"

"And so she took her opportunity to draw a promise from him, and the pledge was sealed by a ring, which he was to wear until he had broken his word. Afterwards, whenever she met him, at the house of his master or in the public street, he would bow low, as though again in search of the lady's foot, and hold up the finger with the ring upon it. At first, we paid no attention to it; but after a while, Grace began to blush —"

"You looked so comically —"

"And you so confused! Oh, Grace, you ought to thank me for giving the story such a favorable version."

"I do, Harry; for it is the first time that you have told it correctly, and I was not quite sure before that — that —"

"That I was not jealous of the poor footman, eh?"

"That you thought I did right."

"You never do *wrong*, Grace!"

"And never did since she was a little baby in my arms," broke in the tremulous voice of grandmother. "Abby told me, on her dying bed, that Grace would be a blessing to the family, and she told me true."

"True! true!" repeated Mr. Linden, in the deep tones of emotion.

Lizzy's arm was twined around her sister, their two hearts beating together; a large round tear-drop stole silently down the manly cheek of the brother; and the proud husband bent his eloquent eyes on her who was for the moment the focus of all eyes, in deeper, holier admiration than ever stirred the pulses of an unwedded lover.

CLINGING TO EARTH.

O do not let me die ! the earth is bright,
 And I am earthly, so I love it well ;
 Though heaven is holier, all replete with light,
 Yet I am frail, and with frail things would dwell.

I cannot die ! the flowers of earthly love
 Shed their rich fragrance on a kindred heart ;
 There may be purer, brighter flowers above,
 Yet with these ones 't would be too hard to part.

I dream of heaven, and well I love these dreams,
 They scatter sunlight on my varying way ;
 But 'mid the clouds of earth are priceless gleams
 Of brightness, and on earth O let me stay.

It is not that my lot is void of gloom,
 That sadness never circles round my heart ;
 Nor that I fear the darkness of the tomb,
 That I would never from the earth depart.

'T is that I love the world — its cares, its sorrows,
 Its bounding hopes, its feelings fresh and warm,
 Each cloud it wears, and every light it borrows,
 Loves, wishes, fears, the sunshine and the storm ;

I love them all : but closer still the loving
 Twine with my being's cords and make my life ;
 And while within this sunlight I am moving,
 I well can bide the storms of worldly strife.

Then do not let me die ! for earth is bright,
 And I am earthly, so I love it well —
 Heaven is a land of holiness and light,
 But I am frail, and with the frail would dwell.

ASPIRING TO HEAVEN.

YEs, let me die ! Am I of spirit-birth,
 And shall I linger here where spirits fell,
 Loving the stain they cast on all of earth ?
 O make me pure, with pure ones e'er to dwell !

'Tis sweet to die ! The flowers of earthly love,
 (Fair, frail, spring blossoms) early droop and die
 But all their fragrance is exhaled above,
 Upon our spirits evermore to lie.

Life is a dream, a bright but fleeting dream,
 I can but love ; but then my soul awakes,
 And from the mist of earthliness a gleam
 Of heavenly light, of truth immortal, breaks.

I shrink not from the shadows sorrow flings
 Across my pathway ; nor from cares that rise
 In every foot-print ; for each shadow brings
 Sunshine and rainbow as it glooms and flies.

But heaven is dearer. There I have my treasure ;
 There angels fold in love their snowy wings ;
 There sainted lips chant in celestial measure,
 And spirit fingers stray o'er heav'n-wrought strings.

There loving eyes are to the portals straying ;
 There arms extend, a wanderer to fold ;
 There waits a dearer, holier One, arraying
His own in spotless robes and crowns of gold.

Then let me die. My spirit longs for heaven,
 In that pure bosom evermore to rest ;
 But, if to labor longer here be given,
 "Father, thy will be done !" and I am blest.

UNDERHILL COTTAGE.

NAY, reader mine, it is all a mistake, all — Fanny Forester could not *breathe* (for a long time) in New York or Albany, or any other pavement-cribbed spot of earth, that men seem to have leased of the Hand that made it, to torture into unnatural shapes for their own undoing. No, no! Give her

“———— the fresh green wood,
The forest's fretted aisles,
And leafy domes above them bent,
And solitude,
So eloquent!
Mocking the varied skill that's blent
In art's most gorgeous piles—”

Give her this, and “other things to accord,” and then — a fig for all town attractions!

Wouldst see, O sympathetic public, the little nestling-place, almost in the wilderness, to which ‘Bel’ Forester's country cousin is most warmly welcomed after a half-year's absence? Then turn thy myriad-footed locomotives thitherward, (forestward, I mean,) as soon as the swelling buds begin to burst, in the spring-time, and the odor of fresh turf and apple-blossoms is out upon the air. Nay, straighten that curl in the lip, and drop the uplifted eye-brow. What if it be a simple spot? Simplicity is a rare thing, now-a-days; and the people of the great world have a wondrous liking for what is rare. Moreover, I doubt if they had purer dews, or softer airs, or brighter waters, where the Euphrates tinkled the first note of time, and the breath was borne to the lips of our mother upon an angel's wing. I am not sure that there are any angels here; but the flowers sometimes have a look to them that makes me afraid to break their stems; and there are moments when it

would require infinite daring to toss a pebble into the brook ; for who can tell but it might hush one of those voices that sing to me in the holy solitude ? The trees, too, have a strange lovingness, leaning over the brook protectingly, and shadowing the little violets, as many a high spirit stoops to watch over a poor human blossom. Oh ! there are beating pulses in the trees, and I love them, because I know there is a Great Heart somewhere, that keeps them all in motion. Perhaps — But you shall not be told all the things that have been whispered in my ear by those fresh-lipped leaves, when not a mortal foot was nearer than the far-off road ; though feet enow were tripping it over the grass blades, and a listener sat perched on every spray. Page on page of spirit-lore have I gathered there ; but I have closed the book now, and “ clasped it with a clasp.” That is my wealth, and I am a miser.

Come to Alderbrook, I say, *in the spring time*, for the crackle of the wood fire, by which I am writing, might be a music which would scarce please you ; and, sooth to say, our winter cheer offers little that is inviting to a pleasure-seeker. It is well to take to the turf when you reach the toll-gate at the foot of the hill ; for the road has a beautiful green margin to it, grateful to feet sick of the dust of a day’s ride. It is not a difficult walk to the top, as I well know ; having climbed it a score of times every year, since first I chased a playful little racer of a squirrel along the crooked fence, fully persuaded that there *was* some sudden way of taming it, notwithstanding its evident scorn of the peeled nut, which I held coaxingly between my thumb and fore-finger. High hills, skirted by forests, are rising on the right ; and on the left, is a slope, terminating in a deep gorge, through which the little brook tinkles, as though myriads of fairy revellers tripped it there, to the music of their own silver bells. Perched on the top of the hill, is a tall, weather-painted house, of a contracted make ; though, like some people, whose mental dimensions have been narrowed, with a very smart, uppish air about it ; and fronting it, away down in a deep, wild ravine, is an old,

moss-grown saw-mill. It has been forsaken this many a long year; the wheel is broken, and the boards are rotting away; but yet it is verily believed by many, that the old saw still uses its rusty teeth o' nights, and that strange, unholy guests, keep wassail there, at the expense of a poor mortal long since mouldering in his shroud. Alas! for thee, old Jake Gawvesley! It was a fearful thing to raise such a pile of worldly possessions between thyself and humanity! How gladly wouldst thou, in that last hour, have bought, with the whole of them, a single love-softened hand to soothe, with such a touch as love only knows, thy throbbing temple! Oh! it is a horrible thing to turn from the world, and bear not away the pure passport of a mourner's tear! Thy grave has never been watered by the dews distilled from a human heart, like the flower-planted ones around it; the small grey stone at its head is broken, and no one cares to replace it; and the thistle nods to the wind above thee. It is said that this saw-mill was erected on an orphan's rights; and men are as fond of the doctrine of retribution, as though they never sinned. Hence the superstition.

You will see, from this point, the little village of Alderbrook, so near, that you may count every house in it. There are two pretty churches; one on the top of the rise called "The Hill," the other nestled down in a very sweet spot on "The Flat." Then we have, besides, the seminary made memorable by poor Jem Fletcher; a district school-house, painted red; and a milliner's shop, painted yellow; three stores, two taverns, (one with a sign-post, once tantalizing to my young eyes, so candy-like did it look in its coat of white, with a wisp of crimson about it,) a printing office, in which the "Alderbrook Sun" rises of a Wednesday morning; a temple of Vulcan, and two or three other establishments, sacred to the labors of our native artisans.

As you pass along, you will find the road lined with berry-bushes and shad-trees, now (it is spring, you know) white with their bride-like clusters of delicate blossoms; and many a thick-shaded maple and graceful elm will wish that you

had waited till midsummer, when they might have been of service to you. Very hospitable trees are those about Alderbrook.

You are within a quarter of a mile of the village; and now the fence on the left diverges from the roadside, making a pretty backward curve, as though inviting you to follow it down the hill. A few steps farther, and you look down upon the coziest of little cottages, snuggled close in the bosom of the green slope, with its white walls and nice white lattice-work, looking, amid those budding vines, all folding their arms about it, like a living sleeper under the especial protection of Dame Nature. Do you feel no desire to step from the road where you stand, to the tip of the chimney, which seems so temptingly near, and thence to plant your foot on the brow of the hill over the brook? It may be that you are a sober-minded individual, and never had any break-neck propensities; may be you never longed to lose your balance on the wrong side of a three-story window, or take a ride on a water-wheel, or a sail on a sheet of foam down Niagara, or even as much as put your fingers between the two teathed rollers of a wool-carder. There *are* people in the world so common-place as to have no taste for "deeds of lofty daring."

There are eglantines and roses grouped together by the windows; and a clematis wreathes itself, fold on fold, and festoon above festoon, in wasteful luxuriance, about the trellis that fences in the little old-fashioned portico. You wonder how any horse-vehicle ever gets down there, and may think the descent rather dangerous; but it is accomplished with perfect ease. A carriage cannot turn about, however, and is obliged to pass up on the other side. The house is very low in front, and has an exceedingly timid, modest bearing, as is sometimes the case even with houses; but when you see it from the field-side, it becomes quite a different affair. The view from within is of fields and woodland; with now and then a glittering roof or speck of white peering through the trees between us and the neighboring village. The back parlor window looks out upon a little garden, just below it;

and beyond is a beautiful meadow, sloping back down to the brook. From this window you have a view full of wild sweetness ; for nature has been prodigal of simple gifts here ; and we have never been quite sure enough that art would do better by us, to venture on improvements. So the spotted lily rears its graceful stem down in the valley, and the gay phlox spreads out its crimson blossoms undisturbed. There the wild plum blushes in autumn with its worthless fruit ; the gnarled birch looks down on the silver patches adorning its shaggy coat, quite unconscious of ugliness ; and the alders, the dear, friendly alders, twist their speckled limbs into any shape they choose, till they reach the height that best pleases them, and then they droop — little brown tassels pendant from each tiny stem — over the bright laughter below, as though ready, every dissembler of them, to take an oath that they grew only for that worship. There are stumps a-plenty, marking where the forest used to be ; and growing from the decayed roots of each, you will be sure to find a raspberry, or purple currant, or gooseberry bush, or at least a wild columbine, whose scarlet robe and golden heart make it quite as welcome. We like the stumps for the sake of their pretty adornments, and so they have let them stand. (Would you know who *we* and *they* are ? come, then, at evening ; you shall be most cordially welcomed ; for, the kindly forbearance with which you have looked upon the first simple efforts of one there beloved, has made you quite the friend.)

Beyond the brook, rises a hill, bordered on one side by a wild of berry bushes, and on the other, by broken rocks, with a little wizard of a stream, leaping, like an embodied spirit of mischief, from fragment to fragment, with a flash, and a clear silvery laugh, to which, I believe, the inhabitants of Underhill Cottage owe the gay bubble dancing on the brim of every heart. The hill (Strawberry Hill we call it, and if you had come to us last midsummer, you should have known the wherefore) is capped with hemlocks, with sprinklings of beech, ash, elm and maple, that, in autumn-time, make an exceedingly gay head-dress for it ; and, peeping out from

their midst, stands the log-cabin of an Indian woman, who is said to have been a hundred years old when she wove my first blossom-stained rattle-box. Last year she went about with her thick blanket, which passed over her shiny hair, fastened under the chin, and surmounted by an old woollen hat; and, on her arm, a huge basket, inside of which was a smaller one, and a still smaller one in that, until they diminished to the size of a fitting shell for the nest of a humming-bird. But now, sadly do we miss the little curl of silver that used to rise so gracefully above the trees; for the log-dwelling is deserted, and its age-worn owner sleeps in the grave-yard. Dear old Polly! many a son of ambition, with his laurels on his brow, will be laid in his coffin, crowds trooping ostentatiously after, with fewer tears to embalm his ashes in, than thy humble virtues won for thee.

A little way from the bridge, is an immense elm tree, draped in green down to the very roots; and just where the shadow of its massive top falls heaviest at noon-day, is a little—for want of a more descriptive name, I must call it a *bower*. Dear was the boyish hand that tied those branches together, and trained the wild grape-vine over all, because a little sister sometimes wished for a dreaming-place more exclusive than the old ledge on the hill-side, or the shadow of the black cherry-tree in the meadow—dear was that kindly hand; and none the less dear is it now that it may never again rest upon the head it has toyed with hours and hours together, long before the mildew of disappointment had spread itself upon our hearth-stone. These days are passed forever and forever; but bless God for the rich memories clinging to every shrub, and tree, and hillock! What is there in all the gay visions dancing before us, one-half so dearly grateful as a single love-glance, a word, a smile, a tear, a touch of the hand, a kindly act, embalmed in the heart when it is young, to keep in flower the spot where it lies, until it has ceased its wearied pulsations? Hope is a butterfly, and Imagination loves to chase it from flower to flower, and from glitter to glitter; but Memory is an angel, that

comes in the holy night-time ; and, folding its wings beside us, forges silently those golden links, which, as years wear away, connect the spirit, world-worn, with its first freshness. But I am dreaming, when I should not.

Come in the spring-time to Alderbrook, dear friend of mine, whatever name thou bearest ; come when the little birds are out, careering, stark mad with joyousness, on their giddy wings ; when the air is softest, and the skies are brightest ; come, and I will cut the nib from my pen, owning, with a right good will, its clumsy inefficiency ; and then, amid bursting buds and out-gushing music, thou shalt have far less reason than now, to complain of the dulness of thy *ciceróne*.

LITTLE MOLLY WHITE.

WE have our excitements at Alderbrook, as well as in your great Babel of "brotherly love," (love like that of the first brothers, I have heard it insinuated,) but the doctrine of cause and effect has a slight *twist-about* between the two places, which might puzzle a philosopher. In your great city, a great cause produces a small effect; in our small village, a small cause produces a great effect. Does a barn or a blacksmith's shop take fire at Alderbrook, the whole village — men, women and children — are up and out; and it furnishes matter for conversation at every tea-party during a year, at least. With you, a whole street may burn down, while you lie quietly snoozing in your beds, or mentally denounce "that noisy engine," between naps; and in less than a week the whole affair passes from the minds of all but the sufferers. You may see a dozen hearses move by in one day, and never be sobered by it; is there a death in our village, the shadow falls on every hearthstone, and a long, solemn train of weeping mourners (the mourning town) leave their various avocations and amusements, and go to lay the sleeper in the dust. Oh! let me die in the country, where I shall not fall, like the single leaf in the forest, unheeded; where those who love me need not mask their hearts to meet the careless multitude, and strive as a duty to forget. Bury me in the country, amid the prayers of the good and the tears of the loving; not in the dark, damp vault, away from the sweet-scented air and the cheerful sunshine; but in the open field, among the flowers I loved and cherished while living. Then —

"If around my place of sleep
 The friends I love should come to weep,
 They might not haste to go;
 Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom,
 Should keep them lingering by my tomb."

But to return to our contrasts. A ruffian meets a stranger in a dark alley, and stabs him to the heart, for the sake of pelf; another whips his wife to death, or perhaps butchers a whole family. The lawyers and paragraphists are thereby furnished with employment — for which they are of course thankful — and, except in extreme cases, no one else cares. It is quite different with us. A drunken Indian murdered a white man, at Alderbrook, some twenty years ago, and paid the penalty of his crime, near the foot of the slope, at the west end of the village, while thousands on thousands stood gaping at the terrible spectacle. This tale, whispered to me in the dark, furnished one of the gloomy visions which used to haunt my childhood; and I would as soon have taken the trip that Orpheus did, as go within a quarter of a mile of “the spot where old Antoine was hung.” The same story, in all its horrible and disgusting details, is to this day repeated and re-repeated by many a gossip of our village, while jaws drop, and eyes stand out with terror, and every stirring leaf or quivering shadow causes a start of alarm; for it is said that the troubled ghost of old Antoine still walks up and down the forests of Alderbrook. With you, picked pockets are such every-day and every-hour things, as to excite no attention at all, except perhaps a laugh now and then, when the feat has been performed with unusual adroitness; but if an axe disappear from a door at Alderbrook, or a couple of yards of linen are taken from the grass in the night-time, the whole village is in commotion, and wonders, and guesses, and sagacious nods and mysterious innuendoes, constitute, for a month at least, the staple of social intercourse. You will not think strange, then, when I tell you of the wonderful excitement that has fairly swept every other topic under with us, for more than six months past. It has been suspected for a long time, that a band of thieves existed somewhere in our quiet county; but such crimes are so unusual here, that no one likes to be the first to give them a name; so, though every washerwoman put her wet linen under lock and key at dewfall, and stables were double-locked and shops

double-guarded, the careful ones only shook their heads mysteriously, as though something lay at the bottom of their knowledge, which they might tell, but that they were too generous, while others scouted at the idea of — county's harboring such rogues. At last, however, some who had lost to an uncomfortable degree, began to speak more plainly, and incredulity wavered. Finally, one night toward the latter end of last May, a farm-house in the neighborhood was fired, obviously (that is, it was obvious when too late) for the purpose of drawing away the villagers, while the principal shop in Alderbrook was despoiled of its most valuable goods. Such a daring deed! said everybody. It was now supposed that the villany must have been carried on for years, and many persons who like a large story, declared that the band must consist of at least fifty men. There had not been such an excitement here since the execution of poor old Antoine. One man was arrested on suspicion, and flattered and threatened by turns, in the hope of bringing him to confess. At last, he promised to do this, and betray his associates, provided he could be assured of his own safety. This was the latest news which reached us one evening toward midnight, and so we concluded to pillow our curiosity until morning.

"They have diskivered the robbers, at last," said old Uncle Felix Graw, hurrying, all out of breath, into our breakfast parlor, and throwing his ungainly figure into one chair, while he stretched his long legs to another. "They have diskivered the robbers, neighbor Forester, every one of 'em!"

Down went forks and up went eye-brows in a twinkling, and old Uncle Felix was the focus of all regards, much to the detriment of the smoking muffins which Nancy had just placed on the table.

"What! now! who are they, Uncle Felix? Nobody belonging to Alderbrook, I hope."

"Not exactly, though the village has just escaped by the skin of the teeth; Jem White is in for it."

"What! that scape-grace of a son of honest Jacky? Poor old fellow! this will be worse for him than digging in the mud, with the 'rheumatis' in his shoulder."

"The old man never has had very comfortable times with Jem," said Uncle Felix. "He is the laziest fellow this side of purgatory, but I never thought he would be caught in such a sorry piece of business as this. They say it will go hard with the rascals — burglary and arson both."

"The old story of idleness and crime. Poor Jacky! I pity him!"

"Everybody pities him; and for one, if I could catch Jem White, I'd give him a thrashing that he would n't forget when he was gray, and let him go, the scoundrel! for his father's sake."

"Then he has not been taken?"

"No, but there is no doubt he will be. Dick Holman, (the cringing serpent! I could pound him to pomice-stone, for I have no idee but he druv on the whole lot,) Dick Holman has blabbed, turned state's evidence, to save himself, and exposed the whole of 'em. Great good will the state get from such a rascally knave as he is; and a great honor is it to the laws, to pay a premium for such abominable sneaking meanness! I would n't mind to see the rest in iron wristbands, (barring Jemmy White, for his father's sake,) but Dick Holman, the mean, cowardly villain! hanging is too good for him."

"How many have they taken?"

"Three, last night. Dick Holman helped them hide, and so betrayed them. One has been traced as far as Albany, and another to Rochester. They will get clear, I dare say; but Jem White has skulked away by himself, and nobody knows where he is. There were only seven on 'em."

"Do you know where White was last seen?"

"He was sneaking about, Saturday evening; he even had the barefacedness to go into Willard's grocery and get a glass of grog. Some pretend to be sure that they saw him yesterday, but folks make a thousand mistakes in such cases; but at any rate, it is pretty certain he must be somewhere in the neighborhood yet. The old 'Sun' press worked hard, I tell you, last night; and, before this time, the handbills are

scattered far and wide, so that he can't get away. And I would n't give an oat-straw for his hiding-place, with Dick Holman to scent him out. He was prowling about after him before sunrise this morning, and trust him for a blood-hound, any day. Ugh! if they should let such a chap as that go scot-free, I, for one, should rather fancy speaking to Judge Lynch about it."

No wonder that honest Sam Graw should be exasperated against the traitorous knave, who, after leading all the idle young fellows that would listen to him into iniquity, turned deliberately about, and, to save himself, delivered his victims into the hands of justice. Dick Holman had been for years the pest of the neighborhood — one of those dirty, cringing, plausible villains, whom everybody despises, but upon whom it is difficult to fix any crime. When, however, it was discovered that a regular system of robbery had been carried on throughout the county, probably for several years, suspicion busied herself at once with the name of Dick Holman; and before he had time to concoct any plan for escape, before he even knew himself suspected, he was seized and brought, by means of threats and promises, to divulge all he knew. And a more rotten-hearted traitor never existed; for now that his own precious person was in danger, there was no indignity to which he would not submit, and no act in which he would not gladly engage, (even to hunting for his most reluctant pupil, poor Jem White,) in order to buy himself consideration. As for young White, he received but little sympathy except on his father's account; but old honest Jacky was, in his way, a great favorite at Alderbrook. There was scarcely a young man in the village for whom he had not conjured whistles out of a slip of bass-wood, in days gone by; and scarce an old one but owed him, poverty-stricken as he was, some generous neighborly turn. Then it was from honest Jacky that we always learned where the blackberries grew thickest; and he brought wild-wood plants for our gardens, and supplied the old ladies with wintergreens and sweet flag roots to munch of a Sunday. But it was scarce these little acts

which made old Jacky White so universally respected. He was the kindest and simplest of old men, kind to man and beast; and if but a worm lay in his path, he would "tread aside and let the reptile live." Toil, toil, toil, from morning till night, and from year to year — toil, toil, toil was the lot of honest Jacky; but not a word of complaint ever escaped from his lips; he was contented and cheerful, and scrupulously honest. Fortune had treated him most scurvily; for notwithstanding his patient, unremitting industry, he had never known at one breakfast what should serve him for the next. After all, however, I do not know as it is quite becoming for me to rail at fortune, since he never did; and, moreover, it is possible that the artless old man was as much in the fault about the matter as the partial and fickle goddess.

Days went by, and nothing was known of Jemmy White. So confident was everybody of the impossibility of his having made his escape, that parties were still out in search of him — and the zeal of Dick Holman was indefatigable. The village was still in a state of feverish excitement, and the "stores" were thronged with people from the remote parts of the town, who flocked in to trade and hear the news.

I was out in my little back garden one bright morning, spoiling the doings of the wanton summer wind, which had had quite a frolic among my treasures the night before; when old Bridget came to the door on tiptoe, with her finger on her lip, and her gown, scarce full enough or rich enough to make much of a rustle, gathered up in her hand. "Fanny, Fanny! 'st!" Bridget spoke in a suppressed whisper, showing all her teeth in the operation, as though, by drawing her lips far back, she might give the words egress with less noise.

"What now, Bridget?"

"Hush, Fanny, dear! 'st!" and putting the fore-finger of one hand to her lip, she beckoned with the other, making a motion with the elbow joint very much like that of a jack-knife with a spring at the back.

Bridget is always having secrets, and shaking her head, and looking solemnly wise, and finding strange mysteries,

which to everybody else are as clear as the sunlight; so I may be pardoned if I did wait to tie up a sweet pea, and give three pretty rose-buds a more desirable position among the wet leaves.

"Fanny, darling!" was again breathed from the opened doorway.

"Yes, Bridget!"

"Hush, dear! 'st!" and Bridget beckoned more earnestly than ever. There was no resisting such importunity, so forward Fanny went, fully expecting to find a chicken with two hearts, or a biscuit that had hopped out of the oven mysteriously, or (an every-day occurrence) a churn full of cream that needed a horse-shoe in it.

"Look, Fanny, look! is n't she pretty?"

Pretty! Old Bridget has some taste at least. Beautiful as a vision of Paradise! I held in my breath while gazing, as my good old nurse had done, and very probably kept my lips out of its way precisely in her fashion. There is always a shade of grey in the passage leading to the kitchen; and here, in the sober light, sat a little child sleeping. One arm was straightened, showing the pretty dimple at the elbow, the fat little hand supporting her weight upon the floor, while the other grasped, as though by way of a balance, a basket of green lettuce, which had wilted during her long walk in the morning sun. The shoulder of the supporting arm had slipped up from the torn calico frock, and its polished whiteness contrasted beautifully with the sun-embrowned cheek. The light golden hair lay in waves, pushed far back from her round forehead, and was gathered up into a knot, half curls, half tangles, behind, probably to keep it out of her way; but carelessly as it was disposed of, it could scarce have been as beautiful in any other fashion. Dim as the light was, a beam had contrived to find its way to the curve of her head, and left a dash of brightness on it, no ill omen to the wearied little stranger. Long lashes lay against the bright cheek, all sparkling in crystal; for the tear that could not climb over it, had turned the little valley about the eye into a well—a very

pretty one for truth to lie in. The child had probably wept herself to sleep ; but her little spirit had gone to a land of brighter things now, for the smile that curved her beautiful lips had none of the premature sadness bathing the shut eyelids. There were broad gaps in the clumsy shoes that lay beside her, for she had relieved herself of the incumbrance, and her chubby little feet, stained with the purple flowers which she had crushed in her morning's ramble, were cooling themselves against the bare floor.

"It is nobody but little Molly White, Miss," said Nancy, coming forward, with the pot-lid in her hand. Nancy's voice is none of the softest, and again Bridget's teeth and tongue were put in requisition, and her lips parted to emit the expository "'st, 'st!"

"And who is little Molly White?"

"Don't you remember Molly White, who used to go tripping by every day last summer, as merry as a bird, to sell blackberries to the villagers, never seeming tired, though she had to walk three miles across the woods, and pick her berries besides—poor thing! But I remember now it was when you were in the city, at your Uncle Forester's, you know; for you did n't come home till the plums were all gone, and the leaves were pretty much off the trees."

"Does she belong in any way to old Jacky White, who lives in the woods beyond the hill?"

"The very same, Miss. Old Jacky's last wife was a young woman, and sort of delicate like, and she died, poor thing, when Molly was but little more than a baby. She always said though that she did n't suffer nor want for anything, for the children were all amazing good to her; and Jem, bad as he is now, nursed her almost as carefully as a woman. Poor thing! she would feel sorrowful enough if she knew what a dreadful end he had come to, for she loved him as she did her own blessed child."

"I have seen pretty Molly many a time when she was a baby. She seems heavy-hearted enough now, poor child! we must try to cheer her up."

"It's of no use, Miss; she takes Jem's misfortune to heart terribly."

"Misfortune! But you are right, Nancy. The vicious, though justice in the shape of legal officers do not hunt them down, *are* the unfortunate of this world."

Our conversation seemed to disturb the sleeper, for suddenly her cheeks flushed, her eye-lids worked convulsively, her bright lips quivered like a little bird so frightened as scarce to struggle for liberty, and the pretty arm which supported her shook beneath the weight.

"It seems cruel to wake her," said old Bridget, compassionately. "This is a sorry bad world for such as she is, poor innocent!"

The child seemed yet more agitated, and tossed her fat round arms above her head, while a broken sob came struggling forth, and, in a voice laden with heart-ache, she exclaimed, "You shall not take him! it was n't he that did it!"

"Molly! Molly!" exclaimed Nancy.

"Mother said we must love one another when her lips were cold, and I will. I *will* love poor Jemmy. You shan't — oh, you shan't take him away!"

"Molly! Molly!" repeated Nancy, more emphatically, and shaking the child's shoulder.

"No, I will not tell; never — never — never!"

"Molly White! Molly!" Nancy raised the child to her feet, who looked about her a few moments, in a kind of bewildered alarm, and then burst into a passion of tears, which nothing could soothe.

Poor suffering little one! that the dregs which usually await a sterner lip, should be upon the brim of thy beaker! that the drop which sparkles on the surface of life's bowl, should be deadened in childhood's tears! the flowers which crown it, concealing the strange mixture for a little time from eyes like thine, fallen, withered, dead! It was a bitter, bitter draught first presented thee by Fate, (may I miscall it — by *sin*,) sweet Molly White. What strange contrasts does this world present! That day so bright, so beautiful, so replete

with the everywhere outgushing spirit of joyousness, and that poor little heart aching with such misery as the guilty ever bring to those who love them ! No wonder that old Bridget and even Nancy, (blessings on their kind souls !) should be strangely blinded by the gathering tears as they led the child away. Throw me out, wretched and friendless, on the wide world, and I am not sure but I should creep to the kitchen rather than the parlor, though I know that generosity, and kindness, and sympathy, are the inheritance of no one condition in life.

It was a glorious day in the beginning of June. Beauty smiled up from the earth ; beauty bent to us from the bright sky ; beauty, a delicious, all-pervading kind of beauty, which often makes the spirit drunk with happiness, shone out upon us everywhere. It was not a day to be wasted in-doors, when the balmy airs, the warm wet skies, and the quivering life-full foliage, were all wooing without ; and we have no hot pavements to flash back the light into our faces, or cramped-up streets, where the air is stifled into sickness before it meets us, at Alderbrook. The broad wavy meadow, spangled all over with bright blossoms, is our magnificent thoroughfare ; and when the sun shines too brilliantly the brave old trees rear for us a rare canopy in the forests. The little wizard stream, leaping and dancing over the rocks, to drop itself into the brook at the foot of the hill, and the long cool shadows lying on the grass beside the trees, each had a magic in them which was quite irresistible. So I went out, and sauntered dreamily adown the meadow, with half-shut eyes and a delicious sense of pleasure stealing over me, at each pressure of my foot upon the yielding carpet. Crossing the little log-bridge at the foot of the slope, I picked my way among the alders on the other side, close by the marge of the stream. Myriads of little pearl-white blossoms bent their soft lips to the wave which bounded to meet them ; and side by side with them, the double-bladed iris sent up its sword-shaped leaves, as proudly as in its prime, though the bare stalks which grew from its centre were all stripped of their blos-

soms. The queen of the meadow stood up in its regal beauty, not far from the water's edge ; further back the spotted lily nodded gracefully on its curved stem, and the crimson tufts of the balm-flower nestled in clusters of green shrubbery ; while the narrow leaf of the willow turned out its silver lining, and the aspen quivered all over, like a loving heart blest with its prayer, above. Beyond, tier on tier, rose galleries of green, with but a step between the uppermost and heaven, all radiant in the luxurious garniture of June. How glorious and grand, and full of life was everything—and how my nature expanded in the midst of it as it would embrace the whole universe. I know there are moments on this side the grave when the shackles of clay do really fall off, and our spirits grow large, as though they had looked into the boundlessness of eternity, and we lift a wing with the angels. But we come back again, dazzled and bewildered ; for we are prisoners in a very little cell, and too large a draught of heaven now would not be good for us. I dallied long about the brook and on the verge of the forest, seeing and dreaming ; and then I wandered on, now listening to the joyous song-gushes of the crazy-hearted little Bob-o-link ; now laughing at the antic red squirrel, as his tiny brick-colored banner whisked from fence to tree ; and now gathering handfuls of the pale sweet-scented wood-violets, which follow the first frail children of the spring. Then there were large banks of moss, of brown, and green, and gold, all richly wrought together, as by the fingers of bright lady-elves, and more elastic than the most gorgeous fabrics of the Persian looms, with now and then a little vine straggling over them, strung with crimson berries ; the sun breaking through the closely interlaced branches above in little gushes of light, which quivered as they fell, and vanished and came again, as coquettishly as the bright-throated humming-bird, which frolicked gracefully with the pink blossoms of the azalia, in the hollow beyond. These were interspersed with little patches of winter-green, tender and spicy, of which I of course secured a plentiful supply ; and clusters of the snowy monotropa appeared at the roots of

trees, clear and polished and pearl-like ; and green ferns grew beside old logs, half wreathed over with ivy — and everything there, from the golden moss-cup to the giant tree, looking up into heaven, shared my thoughts and love.

Then I went on, next stooping to pull from the dark loose soil the long slim roots of the wild sarsaparilla ; and close beside them I discovered the nest of a darling little ground-bird, which flew away and came back again, fluttering about most pleadingly : and so I left the graceful innocent, without even taking a peep at the four speckled eggs, which probably constituted its treasure.

The sun was quite low when I drew near the Sachem's wood, an immense wilderness to the southeast of Alderbrook, better known by sportsmen than any one else. Some pokerish story of the Indian days first gave rise to the name ; and so there was a superstition connected with it which kept timid people (children, at least) aloof. Moreover, old Antoine committed his murder there ; and it was more than half suspected that some of Jake Gawsley's gold might be hidden among the jagged rocks and deep gulleys of the Sachem's wood. However that might be, the mysterious proverb that the "Sachem's wood could bring no good," had been quite sufficient to prevent my young feet from tempting the spirits of evil on the other side of the stump fence which walled it in. But I felt some inclination now to take a peep into the banned forest, and so, scaling the fantastical barrier as I best might, I sprang to a bank as mossy and as bright with the sunshine as any we had on the other side. The air was fresh and pure, and there was a scent of wild-flowers on it which made me feel quite safe ; for flowers always betray the presence of angels. So I wandered on indolently as before, now plucking a leaf, now watching dreamily the shadows which were fast chasing away the sunlight, until I began to suspect it quite time to return home. It was nearly twilight, and I had not seen the sun go down. A few steps further only, and then I would go ; but there was a pretty silvery tinkle just ahead, which might lead to the lurking

place of a troop of fairies. The sound proceeded from the self-same little stream which trips it over the rocks to the east of Strawberry-hill, and comes dancing and sparkling down to the brook at the foot. It was gurgling along quite gayly at the bottom of a chasm, so dark that, as I knelt on the crag above, and leaned over, it was some minutes before I could catch a glimpse of the silver-voiced musician. The ravine was exceedingly narrow, looking as though the Sachem (who was probably a giant) might have split it apart with an immense hatchet; but the feat was evidently performed a long time ago, for it was all mossed over, long wreaths of green flaunted from little clefts on either side, and the pretty blue-bell from the tip of its lithe stem nodded smilingly to its noisy neighbor among the pebbles. I was rising to go away, when a sound like the tread of some light animal made me pause. It came again, and then followed a scrambling noise and a rustle like the bending of twigs laden with foliage; and I looked carefully about me, for I might not be quite pleased with the company I should meet in the Sachem's wood. This gorge must be very nearly in a line with the haunted saw-mill, which is reported to be tenanted by the wandering spirit of old Jake Gawsely, and who knows but the miser himself may now and then come out at dew-fall to look after his concealed treasures. My view was partially obstructed by a wild gooseberry bush, and when I raised my head above it I saw, not the troubled spirit of a dead old man, but a beautiful child, standing on the point of a rock, and looking cautiously about her as though fearful of being observed. It was little Molly White, and I was about calling to her; when, as though satisfied with her scrutiny she swung herself from the rock, clinging by her little fingers to the jagged points, poised for a moment in the air, and then dropped on the platform below. Here she again looked about her, and I drew back my head; for I had had time for a second thought, and I knew that no trifling thing could bring the child to the banned forest alone. Beside she carried on her arm a basket evidently well-laden, which impeded

her progress very much, and a suspicion far from agreeable crept over me as I again leaned my head over the ledge. The child descended with the agility of a kitten: and when at last she reached the bottom, she looked earnestly up and down the ravine, starting now and then, stretching forward her little head, as though fearful that the moving shadows might deceive her. As soon as she became satisfied that she was not observed, she sent out a low clear sound like a bird-note, which was immediately answered by a suppressed whistle. She sprang forward and was met half-way by a man, who emerged from the shadow of the rock just beneath me.

"Where on earth have you been staying, Moll?" he exclaimed, half angrily. "I have fed on nothing but ground-nuts and beech leaves these two days, and—ha! I hope you have something palatable in your basket. Does your arm ache, chicky? This is a heavy load for such little hands to carry. But where have you been? I did n't know but they had nabbed you for your good deeds, and meant to starve me out. Bless me, Moll, how you tremble!"

"Oh, I have been so frightened, Jemmy. Dick Holman suspects all about it—"

"Curse Dick Holman!"

"Some of the other men have told how I ran to you the night that the officers took them, and he thinks I know where you are now. He said they would hang me, Jemmy, if I wouldn't tell—will they hang me?"

The beautiful face was upturned, with such sweet anxious meekness, that the well-nigh hardened brother seemed touched, and for a moment he did not reply.

"Will they hang me, Jemmy?"

"No, Molly, no! they will never harm a hair of your head. But let me tell you, chick, you must n't listen to one word from that devil incarnate—he will be hiring you to betray me yet."

"Dick Holman? Oh no! he can't hire me. He took out a whole handful of dollars, but I would n't look at them, and

he said he would give me a new frock and a pretty bonnet, like the village girls, but I did n't answer him a word. It was then he said—and he spoke dreadful, dreadful words, Jemmy—that he would have me hanged. Do you think he can? I am sure he will if he can. I was always afraid of him, he looks at me so out of the corner of his eye, and goes creeping about as lightly as a cat, so that one never knows when he is coming."

"Never fear, Moll, he can't hurt you," replied the brother, still swallowing down the huge slices of meat like a starved hound. "I only wish I had him again in the place he was when I fished him up from the bottom of the horse-pond—he would beg one while for daylight before he should see it."

"Oh, Jemmy—"

"Hang me if he would n't! That's what a man gets by being good-natured. Dick Holman always pocketed two-thirds of the money, and never run any danger."

"Jemmy! Jemmy!" exclaimed the child, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "You told me you didn't do it! You told me you never took any money, and now—"

"And now I hav'n't told you anything different, little Miss sanctimony; so don't run away from me, and leave me to starve."

"But you ought to tell me the truth, Jemmy—you know it would n't make me care the less for you—though—Oh! it is a dreadful thing to be a thief!"

"Well, you are not a thief, nor—nor I either, so save your sermons and—you might have brought me a little brandy, Moll."

The child sat down on the mossed trunk of a fallen tree, and made no answer.

"Why did n't you come yesterday?"

"Dick Holman watched me."

"Blast him! The curses o' Heaven light—"

Truth does not require the oaths and imprecations of bad men to be written down, and if it did I could hardly give the words of poor Jem White; for there in the solemn woods,

amid the falling shadows, I will own that the hoarse voice of the miserable man inspired me with so much terror that I could scarcely hear him. But I saw the little girl rise slowly and sorrowfully from her seat.

"Jemmy, I cannot stay here, for I know you are a bad, wicked man, and I am afraid of you."

"Afraid, Moll! ha, ha, ha! that's a good one! you afraid! And you came over to the log-barn at midnight, when the officers were out, without flinching a hair. Afraid?"

"You told me then you did n't do it, Jemmy, and I thought you did n't. Oh, it is a dreadful thing to be a thief! Dreadful! dreadful!"

"But Molly, chick, you would n't let them take me, and shut me up in a dark prison—State Prison—Jem White in State's Prison! think on 't, Moll!"

The child sank down on the rocks and sobbed as though her little heart would break; while her brother worked more voraciously than ever at the contents of the basket,

"I'll tell 'ee what, Moll," he at last said, "if you could coax up father to take me home—can't you? Nobody would ever mistrust him."

"No, Jemmy; it was father who first made me believe you had not spoken truth to me. He said, too, last night, that if he could find you he would give you up himself, in the hope that it would do you good."

"Good! A—— sight of good it would do me! Cuss it, Moll—"

"Jemmy," exclaimed the child, starting to her feet, and standing before him with more dignity than her beautiful bright face gave promise of, "Jemmy, I will not hear another bad word from you. What I have done for you may be wicked, but I could n't help it. Mother told me to love you, when her lips against my cheek were cold; and I will bring you victuals and tell you if I hear you are in danger, but you shall not use those wicked words—I will not hear you."

"Bless me, Moll! I have said nothing to make you take on so, and if you like it, you may go and tell Dick Holman

where I am, and get your smart frock and Sunday bonnet, to say your Scripture lessons in. I dare say they will tell you it's a fine thing to send your brother to State Prison—a mighty fine thing, Moll, and you will be a little wonder among 'em."

"You shan't swear, at any rate, Jemmy; for the great God, who sees everything, will be angry with you, and he will let them find where you are if you are so wicked. You know—"

"I know you are a good little child, Moll—too good for that matter—so cease your blubbering, chicky, and tell me how matters are going in the village, and whether Jesse Swift or Ned Sloman have confessed."

The child sat down and gave a circumstantial account of all that had occurred during the few past days, and then added, "They say that you will be taken before a week's end, Jemmy, for they all seem sure that you hav'n't got away."

"Aha! they don't know what a nice little sister I have for a jailer. But you must go now, Moll, for father will be missing you, and then we shall have a pretty how-de-do. Scramble back, chickey-pet, and mind that you keep a sharp look-out on Dick Holman. This is a jewel of a place, but he might track you to it when you had n't a thought of him. Come to-morrow, if you can, for the bread and meat will scarce serve me for breakfast, let alone the lunch that I must take, since I have nothing else to do, before sleeping. You calculated for your own little stomach when you put it up for me."

"I brought all we had, Jemmy, and I went without my own dinner and supper to make it more."

"Well, you are a nice child, Moll, and I won't do anything to bother you. Come to-morrow, and I won't worry your pretty ears with a word of swearing. You are a darling little jailer, and—there—good-night, Molly."

He pressed his lips to the bright cheek of the little girl, and held her for a moment in his arms, then set her on a platform

just by his head, and watched her difficult ascent till she again stood on the verge of the ravine.

"Safe!" shouted little Molly White, almost gleefully, as she leaned for a moment over the chasm. She was answered by a whistle, and the pretty child clapped her hands, as though she now felt at liberty to be happy once more, and bounded away. She went only a few steps, however, and then returned, and kneeling once more on the twisted roots of a tall elm tree that grew upon the verge of the precipice, peered anxiously down the gorge. My eyes involuntarily turned in the same direction. It seemed to me at first as though the shadows were strangely busy; then I saw them making regular strides up the ravine, and a faint sickly feeling crept over me, so that I drew back my head, and closed my eyes. When I looked again I saw distinctly the figures of three men, one a little in advance of the others, making their way up the dark gully of the Sachem's woods. Would they pass by the hiding-place of Jem White, or had his hour come at last, and must that anxious little watcher at the foot of the elm-tree, look helplessly on a scene that would wring her young heart with agony. Bright Molly seemed suddenly to have made a discovery; for she uttered a piercing shriek, which rang through the gray forest with startling wildness, and catching by the bough which had before assisted her descent, she attempted again to swing herself to the first rocky platform. But, in her fright, the little hand missed its grasp; the spring was made, and the bright-eyed child was precipitated to the bottom of the gorge. Jemmy White had heard the warning shriek, and rushed out in time to see the fall of his sister and catch a glimpse of the traitor, Holman leading on the officers of justice, but a few rods from his lair. What would he do? He was probably familiar with every secret lurking-place in that immense wilderness, and night was coming on, so that it might be no difficult thing for him to make his escape. At least his long limbs and hardy frame warranted him the victory in a race, for Dick Holman was a short, clumsily built man, and his companions would

soon weary of clambering over the rocks. Jemmy White's reflections seemed of the precise nature of mine; for, after throwing one glance over his shoulder and another up the ravine, he bounded forward, and sprang across the body of his sister, touching, as he went, her little quivering arm with his foot. Suddenly the man's bold face was blanched, he seemed to waver, and then casting another hurried glance behind him, he made an effort to go on, but his limbs refused their office; a heavy groan, replete with agony, came up from the depths of the gorge; and Jemmy White paused, cowering over the inanimate child as though the two had been alone in the forest. The men came up and laid their hands on his shoulders, but he did not look at them, nor in any way heed their presence; he only chafed the hands of the little girl, and kissed her forehead, and entreated her to open her eyes, for her own brother Jem was there, and it would break his heart if she should not speak to him. The two officers, with the delicacy which the heart teaches to the rudest of men, stood back; but Dick Holman still continued his grasp upon the shoulder of the criminal, as though to assure his companions that he understood this mummery much better than they did. The scene lasted—how long I cannot say—it seemed to me ages. Finally one of the officers came forward with a coil of rope in his hand, and intimated his intention to bind the prisoner. Jemmy White rose from his crouching posture to his knees, and looked up as though vainly endeavoring to comprehend the movements of the men; then he lifted the precious burden at his feet to his bosom, and clasped his arms about her closely as though afraid she might be forced from him.

"I will go with you," he said, meekly; with a dead heart-ache weighing on every word, as it dropped painfully and slowly from his lips. "I will go with you; but don't bind me. I won't get away; I won't try. It don't matter what becomes of me, now I have killed little Molly. Stand off, Dick Holman! take your hand from my shoulder, and stand away! *You made me do it!* I should have been a

decent man, if you had kept away from me, and poor Molly — ay stand off! it may not be safe for you to come too near!”

“We had better bind him,” said one of the men, glancing at his companion for approbation.

“No, no; leave me my arms, for Molly’s sake, and walk close beside me, if you are afraid. I won’t try to run away. It’s of no use now — no use — no use!”

Jemmy White’s lips moved mechanically, still repeating the last words; and the officer crammed the coil of rope into his pocket again, and moved on beside the sobered prisoner notwithstanding the cautionary gestures and meaning glances of Dick Holman.

That night, the arrest of Jem White and the dreadful accident which had befallen his little sister, were the subjects of conversation at every fireside; and much softening of heart was there toward the wretched prisoner, when it was known that he owed his arrest to the humanity which was only stifled, not dead, within him.

When poor little Molly White opened her bright eyes again, she was in the cell of a prison; for it would have been death to the agonized brother to have her taken from him, and even honest Jacky, notwithstanding his stern, unwavering integrity, and his abhorrence of the slightest deviation from it, had plead earnestly for this indulgence. Besides, Molly White must be taken care of somewhere at the expense of the county, and there was no poor-house; so Jem’s prayer was granted.

When she awoke to consciousness, she looked earnestly into the face of her brother, who was leaning over her, bathing her temples as tenderly as a mother could have done; and then glanced upon the gloomy walls and scanty furniture of her sick chamber.

“Where are we? Did they find you, Jemmy?” she inquired — “Dick Holman and those other men?”

The tears rained over the bronzed cheeks of the prisoner in torrents; and the child wiped them away with her little

dimpled hands, whispering softly, "I am sorry I called you a bad man, Jemmy."

"Bad, Molly! Oh, I am very, very bad!" sobbed the repentant criminal.

"But you are sorry, Jemmy," and the little round arms were folded over the neck which they had often clasped most lovingly before; but never with such touching tenderness. 'And so the angels love you dearly, for the good Bible says that they are gladder for one man who is sorry for being wicked, than for a great many men that never do wrong. The angels love you, Jemmy; and mother is an angel now.'

"She used to love me, and beg me not to get into bad ways; but I almost broke her heart, sometimes, Molly!"

"Well, she loves you yet; and you are very sorry for what you have done; and so—we shall be happy, oh, *so* happy!"

The prisoner glanced about his cell, and his brow was contracted with pain.

"I know where we are, Jemmy, for I have looked in here before; and it is better, a great deal better, than hiding in the woods. I am glad they let me be with you; I am not afraid here, for you are good now, and just as sorry for being wicked as ever you can be. We will live here always, Jemmy, if they will let us; and then we shall always be good. Don't cry, Jemmy. I wish you would fix my head—a little nearer your cheek—there, so;—now kiss me and I shall go to sleep."

How different that sleep from the one I had admired a few days earlier! But the child was far happier now.

Perhaps the strong interest excited by the accident to little Molly might have operated in Jem White's favor quite as much as his own simple, unobtrusive penitence; but popular sympathy followed him to his cell, and remained by his side during the trial. So true and heartfelt was this sympathy, that there was a general elongation of countenance when he was condemned, and a universal, and, for a moment, uncontrollable burst of applause when he was recommended to

mercy. As some palliating circumstances came to light during the trial, it was not difficult to obtain a pardon for Jem White; and I am sure no one at Alderbrook regrets the exercise of clemency in his behalf. To be sure, his trial has been of only six months' duration; but he is so gentle and kind, and withal so sober, and industrious, and contented, that everybody places entire confidence in his reformation. Bold, bad Jem White has become strangely like his father; and the good old man goes about, calling on everybody (for honest Jacky knows that he has a friend in everybody at Alderbrook) to rejoice with him, for he is more blest than any other mortal; while his simple heart swells more than ever with gratitude to God and love to man. As for darling little Molly, she is one of those guileless creatures often doomed — nay, not doomed — so blessed, I should have said, as to live for the good of others. Her bright face has grown thin and pale with suffering, but there is a sweeter smile on it than ever; and when Jemmy carries her in his arms, as he does every Sabbath, to the village church, she tells him how glad she is for the accident which has crippled her, because it has given her such a dear resting-place. Little Molly will probably never be straight again — perhaps she never will walk — but she smiles at the prospect, and talks cheerfully of the wings which will be given her in heaven.

Dick Holman, alarmed by some rather hostile demonstrations on the part of Felix Graw and a few other determined spirits of the neighborhood, disappeared from among us on the day he was set at liberty, and has never since honored Alderbrook with his presence.

MY OLD PLAYMATE.

CHARLEY HILL was an old playmate of mine—a saucy, good-natured, mischief-doing, flower-loving, warm-hearted, gentle, brave little playmate—and many a tale might the green-mossed stones lying among the alder-roots on the border of the lazy brook, and the tall grass that waves on the hillside, tell of our young gambols. Oh! those rare, bright days—the days of my childhood! How I wish that I could make a compromise with the old fellow of the hour-glass, and save a handful of his sand from the end of my term, to glitter in the sunshine of the beginning—for myself do I most sincerely wish it; but more, much more, for thee, poor Charley Hill! Some people are born with a shadow on the brow, a shadow which refuses to be removed, though the wheel of life should roll forever in prosperity; yet I have known the sad gift to be accompanied by a spirit which mellowed and softened it, till the apparent curse proved a blessing. But my old playmate was not one of these. No cloud was on his face or his fortunes. The light centred in his gay heart shone from parted lip and beaming eye, and was scattered without stint on all who came near him. A frank, jovial boy was Charley Hill, in those play-days; with a ready hand, a ready smile, and a ready wit; to say nothing of the charmingest of all charming hand-sleds, and a very discriminating little fowling-piece, which he assured me never shot anything but crows. No boy at Alderbrook had so handsome a face as Charley—that everybody said; and no boy had so handsome a cap, (that bright purple velvet, with the two silken tassels dangling so gracefully from the apex,) nor so white a collar, nor such a “cunning” little jacket—though that everybody did *not* say. Little girls are much better initiated in such mysteries than older people.

I will not assert that my old playmate, Charley, was a perfectly faultless lad; for who but his own naughty self was the occasion of my travelling about two mortal hours, my hands tied fast to the schoolmistress' girdle, just because he lured me down to the brookside to angle for trout with a crooked pin, when stupid people thought I should have been poring over Webster's "elementary?" And who but that wicked little scapegrace of a Charley, with his winsome ways and generous little heart, led me to spoil my new white cambric apron as I did the first time I wore it? Who but Charley *could* have done it? I will tell the story to all who remember well when they were children; but those whose memories cannot look back through the crust upon the heart, will do well to turn away to something wiser. We had a grand tea-party at my baby-house under the old black cherry tree, and our dolls must have been surfeited with the luxuries spread before them. There was one thing in our feast, on which we prided ourselves not a little — a dish of pretty crimson balls, made of the wool that a dozen little fingers had busied themselves in picking from Debby Jones' red petticoat, nicely imbedded in a snowy pile of soap suds — an excellent substitute for strawberries and cream. Just before the party broke up, who should make his appearance but Charley Hill; but when called upon to admire our ingenuity, our climax of witty inventions, he manifested a very boy-like indifference, and said nothing but "pooh!" Charley might have argued the point a week, while we in defending it might have become so earnest as to eat our mock strawberries; but that contemptuous "*pooh!*" was too much. While the little girls, with disconcerted faces, were turning elsewhere for diversion, Charley took me aside confidentially. There were strawberries a plenty just over the brook; a thick spot — and oh, *so* thick! and Charley's eyes grew big and *black* with the recollection.

If Fanny would just run over with him —

"But my mother, and my new apron!"

It would take only a minute, and I could put my apron out of the way — and oh, such a thick spot!

I was not convinced, but *I liked Charley Hill*. It was a delightful day; and by the time I had left the path to wade off in the tall grass, I not only forgot my mother's injunctions, but forgot my apron also. A rare frolic did Charley and I have among the dandelions and golden-hearted daisies. I linked the white-petalled blossoms together, after the fashion of the rose-coronets, which would-be (or rather should-be) duchesses decked their foreheads with during the past season, and fastened them to his cap; and Charley curled the green stems of the dandelions, and hung them among the natural brown, till I might have claimed relationship with the mermaids. Then we picked buttercups and held them beneath each others' chin, till we made the surprising discovery that both loved butter; and then we sought very diligently after the four-leaved clover, though to be sure its magic was quite above our juvenile comprehension. Next we picked a stem of the golden rod, and went in search of concealed treasures, till finally we arrived at the strawberry knoll. Charley had told the truth; it was crimsoned over with its blushing wealth. Up from the shadow of every green leaf peeped the round, luscious berry, soft and bright as the swell of a pouting lip; and Charley hurra'd, and clapped his hands, and turned a somerset, before he could set himself quietly about picking them. Then, as I quite forgot my new apron, and, nestling down in the grass, crushed more strawberries beneath my knee than my fingers picked, Charley told a story, which sent many a dew-like looking heart-messenger from my cheek to the tip of a clover-leaf or the bended point of a grass-blade. It was of old Jake Gawsely, who was dying alone in the brown house at the top of the hill. Old Jake had not a friend in the world, so Charley said, and to be sure he did not deserve one; but it was a dreadful thing to lie there alone, with nothing but his bad deeds to think about, and nobody to pity him. Charley pitied him, and so Charley's playmate began soon to pity the neglected miser too; and we mutually hoped that if we should ever do wrong ourselves, people would be kind to us, so as to "make us good again." And then we

picked my apron, my unfortunate new white apron, full of strawberries, and carried them to the little brown house; and we actually got a tear for our pains. Poor old Jake Gawsely! How much of neglect, of unkindness, and perhaps of scorn, on the part of thy fellows, there might have been in that impenetrable cerement of self, folded so closely around thy world-deadened heart!

Years went by, and Charley Hill was the same careless, light-hearted, good-humored, mischievous lad, though there was a touch of pathos about him, a well-spring of poetic feeling, and almost womanly sympathy, which made him strangely attractive. Everybody loved Charley, not merely for his hearty boldness, (a quality which usually gains consideration for boys,) but for his gay good humor, his mingled wit and sentiment, and his gracefulness and beauty. Then there was a guilelessness, a little less than girlish simplicity about him, a credulous trust in everybody's purity of intention, and a generous reliance on those who professed themselves his friends, which, like many other lovable traits of character, seem to us fitter for a resident of heaven than of this world. But for all this, there was a life-like roguishness about Charley, which fully proved his humanity.

Charley Hill and I always stood side by side at the spelling-school; for both of us were thoroughly versed in Webster's spelling-book, from "Baker" to the last word of "Ail-to-be-troubled—table." One winter, the school from Crow Hill was to engage in a spelling contest with ours; so our big boys called a meeting, voting out the "babies," (as they contemptuously denominated a respectable class of little people,) and making other arrangements to secure a victory for ourselves. From this time, great were the preparations for the reception of the enemy. Every evening, troops of little urchins were marshalled before the schoolmaster's desk, and drilled like a company of militia on training-day, and with about the same result. There was not authority enough among us all to preserve order, and so our rehearsal usually ended in a snow-balling party. At last the important evening

arrived; and anxious brows and throbbing hearts found their places inside the village schoolhouse. But one eye was tearful, and there was one pouting lip; for it was a snowy evening, and a careful mother had decided that her child was safest at home.

"If the sleigh were here, she might ride, Charley; but I cannot let her walk so far."

Charley's eye brightened. "Perhaps I can find a sleigh; I will ask Deacon Palmer."

Away went Charley, leaving smiles behind him; for who ever knew Charley Hill to fail in an undertaking? and it would be a pity if he should begin with his old play-mate. It was not long before the merry jingle of bells announced the arrival of the sleigh, and I hastened to bury myself in cloak and hood, just as Charley's mischievous eyes peeped through the opening door.

"Quick Fanny! all ready! — whoa — whoa!"

I gave my hand to Charley and was gracefully handed to a seat — *on a hand-sled*.

"Get up! whoa Teddy! g' long," and off started our noble steeds — four boys hung with sleigh-bells, and frisky as young colts — while Charley gravely followed in the capacity of footman. Charley Hill's hand-sled never lost the title of "the deacon's sleigh," while a runner lasted.

Pity that we cannot always be children. It is a very uncomfortable thing to be dignified and proper; and I would advise every child to put a stone on his head to keep him from growing; if, by so doing he may prevent the stone from falling on his heart. Charley and I outlived our childhood, and so, in a very slight degree, our naturalness. My old playmate became a tall, graceful stripling, with very glossy hair and very bright eyes; and I did not dare show my liking for him as when we used to hide ourselves among the alders, lest the other children should discover us, and interrupt our tête-à-tête amusements. And now Charley did not always walk beside me from our little village parties, nor ever give up an amusement because I was not engaged in it, nor share with me his

little secrets — his plans for innocent mischief, and his likes and dislikes — as before. Yet we were very warm friends ; and often talked of our play-days, and wondered for the sake of aping our elders if we should ever be so happy again ; when at that very moment our hearts were brimming over with happiness. It is strange that we so seldom appreciate the present — that we never do until the thorn is in it. Bliss is so much a thing of eternity that it has no way-marks, nothing by which to measure the hours embalmed in it ; but sorrow is the child of Time, and holds in her hand a dial marking to our weary eye the infinitesimal particles of which moments are made. Charley was a favorite with everybody — he was so gay, and so generous, and so companionable. A little too companionable, thought an ambitious parent, who, proud of his son's rare talents, was bent on cultivating them to the utmost. I must not be thought guilty of undue partiality to my old play-mate when I say that Charley was really, notwithstanding his social qualities, a close student. Everybody said it but his exacting parent. He was not satisfied, however, and at last resolved on sending his gifted idol where he hoped he might be perfected ; to Judge ——, an experienced lawyer and an old friend, in the metropolis. At first we missed Charley Hill very much ; for a village society never can afford to lose one from its numbers, particularly if that one chance to be "the star of the goodlie companie." But at length we learned to dispense with his hilarious laugh, and song, half mirth, half pathos, his graceful sayings and witty repartees ; and though Charley was far from being forgotten, we found it possible to have a social gathering without him.

I had been three whole months, three long, tedious months, away from home ; and I was wild with joy on my return. The pigs, the ducks, the chickens, the flowers, and trees were all called upon to share in my exultation ; and it required all the tongues the house afforded to answer my incessant outpouring of questions.

"When was Ada Palmer here last?" and "Has little Susy May grown any?" and "Oh! has Charley Hill got home?"

To the last my mother gave a quiet *yes*. And was he as handsome as ever, and as agreeable, and as good?

She half shook her head, and sighed ominously.

"Is Charley sick?"

"No, quite well."

"And has n't he come home to stay?"

"Probably."

"What is the matter then?"

"Look! yonder is Ada Palmer just coming down the slope;" and away I flew to meet her.

We kept open doors that evening, and everybody seemed to know it — everybody but Charley Hill. He did not come; and I went to sleep wondering what change had come over my old play-mate. The next day I met him accidentally in the street; and I noted a pleased sparkle in his eye, and a flush on his cheek; but he extended his hand half hesitatingly, and there was a painful confusion in his manner which puzzled me. Why should the frank, noble-hearted Charley Hill blush and cast down his eyes, as though detected in a crime, at sight of an old friend? The next evening, I was invited to a social gathering at Deacon Palmer's. Charley Hill was not there, and I inquired the wherefore.

"Is it possible, Fanny! don't you know?"

"Know what?"

"Why, nobody invites Charley now."

"Why?"

Ada shook her head, and compressed her lips with an expression of intense severity.

"Why, Ada?"

"For the best of reasons, poor miserable fellow that he is! He is not fit to associate with respectable people."

"Tell me — has Charley done anything! what is the matter?"

"Matter enough to break his poor father's heart, and make

all the rest of the family miserable. He is shockingly dissipated."

It was the bursting of a thunderbolt. Poor Charley Hill!

That night I collected together, in one dream, all the frightful stories I had ever heard of vice, and degradation, and misery; and strewed them along narrow, filthy streets, where Charley Hill walked, as though quite at home. At last there was a blow given, a shriek, a stream of blood, a dead, heavy corse; and, all trembling with horror, I awoke. How thankful was I that my old playmate was not a murderer; and how I lay and arranged plan after plan for his redemption, plan after plan which shrivelled to a cobweb as soon as woven!

When morning came, I made inquiries and learned more of Charley Hill. His singular powers of fascination had led him into temptation to which the less gifted are seldom exposed. He was full of wit and vivacity; his natural gaiety and good humor were unbounded; and he was self-confident and unsuspecting. It was a long time before Charley Hill became at all aware that he was wasting himself; and then he quieted his conscience with the thought, "It is necessary *now*; when once I am home again all will be well." So he went on till he seemed to have lost the power of saving himself; and just at this critical time, perhaps not more than a fortnight too late, Judge —— first began to take note of the derelictions of his young charge. In the mean time a few reports had reached Alderbrook, and alarmed Squire Hill. He proceeded to the metropolis, received the whole weight of his friend's newly acquired knowledge, (much of it of course exaggerated,) before seeing his son, showered upon the culprit a torrent of expostulations, which the goadings of disappointment made very angry ones; and finally concluded to remove him at once from his companions to the quiet of Alderbrook. The last was the only wise thing done. Here Charley Hill might have been saved if but his own plan for "doing people good" had been carried out. His father was very angry, and used much severity; his mother and sister received him with

tears and chidings. The last would have won his heart, but the regret it occasioned was accompanied by a strong sense of degradation, which made him anxious to escape their presence. Their treatment of him was full of tenderness, but it was a kind of tenderness which showered humiliation on its object, and should not have been continued more than one day. If but one person had shown a cheerful confidence in him he might have been encouraged and strengthened. But his old friends stood aloof. True, they sometimes greeted him kindly, but there was something even in that very kindness which made him *feel* their knowledge of the taint that was on him. Is it strange, that, without sympathy, without companionship with the good, his pride daily wounded, and his self-respect daily diminishing, Charley Hill should become reckless of consequences, and indulge his socialness at the expense of higher qualities? Certainly my old playmate was made no better by being removed to Alderbrook. The vicious are everywhere, and Charley in his loneliness turned to them. This was the climax of his evil doing. He had been driven to it, true, but he should not have yielded to the force which even the good had turned against him. If he had stood firm for a couple of years, not merely unsupported, but against the overpowering weight of neglect which was thrown into the balance on the side of wrong — if he had borne well the severest of all severe trials for a sensitive nature, his first failure might have been forgiven and he restored to his former position among us. There are, doubtless, men who might have done it; but alas, how few! Charley Hill struggled a little; but, when he reached up his hand from the gulf into which he was falling, there was no one to take it. There were enough that *thought* themselves ready to help him; but they forgot that he was a brother, and poor Charley remembered the past and turned from them.

“It is a somewhat questionable experiment; and your plan you will find very difficult of execution.” So spake a careful mother, evincing a sensitive regard for the welfare of her own child; the only thing that could blind an eye usually so

discriminating, or momentarily steel a heart so full of charity.

"You are but a young girl, my Fanny."

"I will talk only with young girls, then; but Charley and I were old friends, and he has a right to expect kindness of me."

"Not *a right*, my child; he has forfeited that."

I had some confused, indistinct notions of the peculiar rights of the erring, the consideration and attention which we owe each other on a sea so full of breakers, but I did not venture on advancing them, lest I should injure the cause of Charley Hill by opinions heterodox.

Days went by, and my old playmate had become a very frequent visiter at Underhill. He was received at Deacon Palmer's, also, and at several other houses in the village; and the effect was soon visible in his altered appearance. But all this was not done without opposition; and there were people in the village — good people — that had done much to reform the vicious, and were ready to do more — who bitterly denounced the course we were pursuing. It was not in accordance with their own plan. Charley Hill should have been obliged to give a pledge of reformation, and stand a trial; it was too much to receive him on trust. The most critical position which a man can occupy in this world, the most dangerous, is when he stands balancing on the barrier between vice and virtue. Vice woos, and virtue frowns. The bad beckon, and smile, and promise; while the good, who should have all the smiles and be able to present all the attractions that cluster so profusely around a life of purity, speak their meanings with severity, stand aloof, as though afraid of contamination, and scarce encourage a return. Not that men are so unforgiving to the erring. The sympathy for the self-degraded which has sprung up everywhere, proves that they are not. But it is a fashion of the day to encourage extremes. The lady who will take a drunkard from the gutter, and clothe and feed him, will severely censure her sister philanthropist for using a more delicate and less apparent influence to keep the thoughtless young wine-drinker from

falling into it. It matters but little whether smiles or tears are employed, if the good be accomplished. We tried smiles with Charley Hill. We scattered roses in his path, and won him many a step back, and tried to keep him there, but —

As I have before intimated, many good people felt outraged that Charley Hill should be treated as though he had never erred, and be received in some families at Alderbrook as formerly. He should be punished; he deserved a lesson; he ought to be taught that he could not sin without paying the penalty. There was plausibility in much that they said, else, alas! their reasonings would have had less weight with us. They contended that if society really had the power of reforming him, it was not *such* society. They intimated even that parents were exposing their children to contamination by this course. We were too young, they said, to do good to our playmate. Too young! Could those who were older understand the case so well as we; we who held the key to Charley Hill's nature, and were almost as familiar with every nook and cranny within his heart as our own? Poor Charley! we *could* have saved him; but "public opinion" was against us, and — we failed.

Door after door was shut against Charley Hill; door after door, till, alone again in the world, he turned from the happy firesides which had for a while stayed him in his course, and plunged headlong into the yawning vortex of dissipation. Before, he had stepped cautiously and hesitatingly; he had paused and looked behind him, and dallied with the flowers which grew on the brink of the precipice. But now he gave one desperate leap, and was gone forever. As Charley Hill's was not a gradual wandering away from the path of right, but a sudden mad plunge, so was his course short and his end tragic. But we will leave him to his rest on the spot where he once sat, beneath the elm tree close in the corner of the churchyard, to watch the burial of old Jake Gawsely. He dropped a tear there; a tear of pity for the friendless old man, who was hustled into his grave by the hands of those he had injured. Perhaps some watchful angel may have

caught that tear, and borne it up before him to the throne of the Eternal; and the gentle tribute may ere this have been laid back on his own earth-defiled spirit, to freshen and to purify it. A dark, dark fate was thine, poor Charley! woven by thine own fingers, true, but lacking the white and golden threads which those who once loved thee might have added; a dark, dark fate, which my pen refuses to record or my thoughts to dwell upon. Many virtues were thine, my old playmate; there was much in thee to love, much to pity, much to censure; God forgive thee! God forgive the mistaken philanthropists of Alderbrook!

OUR MAY.

"OUR MAY," as everybody called May Loomis, was the merriest, blithesomest, busiest little creature that you ever saw—a perfect honey-gatherer without the sting—an April smile, with a cousin's face for the contrasting cloud. It seemed impossible to bring a shade of seriousness over that joyous face; for although I have seen tears starting from her eyes, they were always checked by a smile, or if suffered to fall upon her face, they were lost in a profusion of roguish dimples.

Our May had a cousin, the cloud above mentioned, who rejoiced in the same appellation; but although everybody said that Miss May Loomis was a very excellent young lady, no one ever thought of placing the possessive before her name. Indeed, I do not think Miss May would have liked such a partnership concern, for she had a high opinion of her own dignity, and she thought it must be very painful to any woman of delicacy to be hailed by all she met as though under their especial protection. The good-natured laugh of the old farmers shocked her nerves, and the cordial grasp of their horny hands was quite too much for lady-endurance. Miss May was very often annoyed, when walking with her cousin, by the exclamation, "There goes our May!" from the lips of some poor washerwoman, or errand-boy; and then to see them fly across the street, as though on terms of the greatest intimacy! Why, it was preposterous. So presuming! But Miss May was still more annoyed by the excessive vulgarity of her thoughtless little cousin, who would often stop in the street to inquire after the health and prosperity of the offenders, and send some little message to the children at home. On such occasions the Cloud usually drew herself up to her utmost height, and to avoid the dis-

grace of such improper conduct, walked home alone, in the most dignified manner. But then Miss May's walk was always dignified, if walking by rule and compass constitutes dignity; and she was never known to do an *improper* thing in her life. She always carried her hands in one particular position, except when, for the sake of variety, she changed them to one other particular position; and her pocket-handkerchief, which she held between the thumb and finger of the left hand, was allowed to spread itself over the three remaining fingers in a very becoming manner. Her neck ribbon was always crossed upon her bosom, the two ends of precisely the same length; and her collar never had in it a wrinkle. There were two or three plaits in the waist of her dress, because somebody, that she considered undisputable authority, had said that plaits were graceful; but she carefully eschewed all extravagance, in the quantity, if not the quality, of the cloth she honored by wearing. Her hair (this was the climax of the young lady's nicety) was so carefully brushed and pomatumed, that it seemed one glossy convex surface, surmounted by a braid of—no one could have imagined what, but for the pale blue ribband that relieved the brown, and gave the curious examiner the idea that it might be of the same material as the head covering.

Miss May's nicety extended to everything about her. Her house-plants were prim and perpendicular, trimmed of every redundant leaf; and she was often heard to lament an opening blossom, because it would produce irregularity, by throwing the balance of ornament on one side of the plant. The Cloud was fond of exercising her skill in trimming trees in the shape of cones and other figures, while her cousin fostered luxuriance in their growth, and would rather hang on them a wilder wreath, or twist a limb awry, than to see the ornaments of her uncle's garden standing out stark and stiff, like the spokes of a wagon wheel. Yet the cousins never clashed; for the regularity of Miss May extended to her disposition and heart; and, having her own excellent rule of rectitude, she would as soon have been caught laughing

aloud, or romping in the court yard, or wearing a rumpled dress, as swerving from it in the least degree. On the other hand, our May was too careless and too light-hearted to be annoyed by her nice cousin's trifling peculiarities; and she never opposed her tastes, nor interrupted her in anything except a lecture on propriety. Miss May never spoke but in the gentlest voice, and the most unexceptionable words; but then she often felt it to be her duty to admonish her wild cousin of the folly of her doings, which admonitions our active little Hebe found peculiarly irksome. She, however, soon invented a way of warding off these avalanches of good advice, quite worthy of her wit. When Miss May would enter the parlor with a grave look of reproof, and commence with the ominous words, "My dear cousin, I feel it my duty to expostulate—" the offender would interrupt her.

"Oh, wait a minute, May, deary, I have something to tell you. Mr. Melroy——"

This sentence was sometimes finished in one way, and sometimes in another; but Mr. Melroy was the magic word; and after making her fair monitress blush crimson, the little tormenter would glide out of the room and express her self-gratulation by a laugh as long and loud as it was musical.

Mr. Melroy was our village clergyman; a young bachelor of twenty-eight, and a general favorite with all classes of men. He was friendly and courteous with all, for he looked upon the whole human family as his kindred; and his heart never refused to the meanest beggar, the appellation of *brother*. His voice was full and melodious, but somewhat solemn; his countenance exhibited a dash of melancholy, though so modified by Christian benevolence as to be peculiarly interesting; and his manner was correct and gentlemanly. The two cousins were members of Mr. Melroy's church; and their uncle, 'Squire Loomis, was his personal friend; so it was not at all to be wondered at that he became their frequent visitor. Neither is it a matter of wonder that our May, light-hearted, smiling, blithesome May, contrasted as she was with her grave companion, should almost escape

the young pastor's notice. Our May saw that Mr. Melroy's attention was all directed to the Cloud; but she was not sorry, for it gave her an opportunity to watch his fine eyes, as they lighted up with the enthusiasm of his subject, and to catch the variety of expression which genius can throw upon the most serious face. Our May liked merriment, but she liked Mr. Melroy better; and she never ventured to breathe a word until she was sure he had quite finished. Then she would make some remark, so comical, that Mr. Melroy would be obliged to waste a smile upon her in spite of himself; and Miss May would quite forget the half hour's profitable conversation in planning a reproof.

Sometimes Mr. Melroy would walk with the young ladies, or rather, with the Cloud, for our May was constantly bounding from the path to pluck a flower or chase a butterfly. And yet she somehow never lost any part of the young clergyman's profitable conversation, for when they were alone she would tease her sedate cousin by distorting his beautiful sentiments and sadly misapplying his comparisons; and then she would steal away to poor blind Becky and glad her pious heart by a repetition of his pure teachings. Our May was certainly not without faults; but her young heart was a living, feeling, acting thing; and she had happily given it all, even its volatility, to the guidance of a safe Hand.

Both of the cousins had a class in the village Sabbath school, and Miss May was the secretary of two or three benevolent societies, of which our May was only a quiet, unobtrusive member. Some people wondered that the relative, and constant companion of such a *pattern-lady* as Miss May Loomis, should choose such a questionable way of exhibiting her charity, as to visit the poor in person, and administer to their wants, even when it called her away from the meetings of the society; but others fearlessly advocated their favorite's cause; while the sober-faced young clergyman said nothing. Before old Mr. Thompson left, Miss May used to tell the delinquent that she knew Mr. Thompson disapproved of such conduct; but she dared not mention Mr. Melroy's name, as it

was a signal which our May failed not to answer with an exceeding gay volley. The truth was, everybody said that Mr. Melroy did not call so often at 'Squire Loomis' for nothing; and as Miss May was very far from being nothing, she was very naturally concluded to be the something that so attracted. When anybody asked home questions about this matter, our May laughed, and looked very knowing, while her cousin blushed, and looked very dignified. Thus matters went on for a long time, and thus they might have gone on, in spite of several old ladies, who endeavored to introduce variety by prophesying it, but for an occurrence in which our May most sadly overstepped the bounds of propriety.

It was on a fine afternoon, in the beginning of August, that the young pastor was seen leading the fair cousins beyond the little clump of houses which we dignified by the title of village. Miss May's step was as precise as ever; but our bright lady of the possessive pronoun, walked more as though she thought she could guide herself, and was seeking an opportunity to drop the gentleman's arm. Their walk was as usual, delightful to all; for Miss May was treated with the most scrupulous attention — Mr. Melroy found the air refreshing and the scenery beautiful, to say nothing of the valued society of the Cloud, and our May was always pleased. On this day she was even more frolicsome than usual; and, having accidentally broken a wreath of frail, beautiful flowers, which she had been weaving, Mr. Melroy so far unbent himself as to say he wished she had never linked a more enduring chain.

"What can he mean?" thought laughing May; but at that moment her attention was arrested by a field of haymakers, among whom she recognized familiar faces. The recognition was mutual; for instantly a young man called out "There's our May!" and the giddy girl, turning about with an arch smile, and shaking her finger at her companions, sprang lightly over the fence, and was soon in the midst of the haymakers. The young man, who at first recognized her, seized one of her hands, while a woman in a blue frock and

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calico bonnet appropriated the other ; and the whole party, men, women and children, gathered around the pretty hoyden, with a familiarity, which to Miss May was perfectly astounding. Our May stood but a moment in the centre of the group, when a dozen voices, pitched on every imaginable key, roared forth a boisterous laugh, not, however, quite drowning her own clear, ringing tones ; and then, with a sort of mock courtesy, she was bounding away, when the young man again stopped her. Our May paused a moment as though undecided, while the young man stood before her, and by his earnest gestures seemed urging some affair of importance. Then a little girl was seen to leave the circle, and run until she came within hearing of the waiting couple, when she called out —

“ Our May — Miss Loomis, I mean — says if you will excuse her, she will walk home alone, as she is n't quite ready now.”

Mr. Melroy looked at Miss May, and Miss May looked at Mr. Melroy, and then both looked at the offending cousin. She had gone a little aside from the haymakers, and was talking with the young man, and from their manner, it was evident that the conversation was intended for no other ear.

“ We ought not to leave her,” said Mr. Melroy.

“ We ought to leave her,” said Miss May, in a decided tone, and the gentleman complied.

It would be labor lost to follow home the astounded couple, as, for some reason, neither spoke until they entered Mr. Loomis' parlor ; nor even then, for Miss May betook herself to her embroidery, and Mr. Melroy to the newspaper.

If our sober readers have not already shut the book, we would like to have them follow our May, our darling, bright, frolicsome, generous-hearted May ; and learn the whole truth before they condemn her.

Joshua Miller, the owner of the hay-field, was a plain old farmer, that May had often seen in her uncle's *store*, and for whom, indeed, 'Squire Loomis entertained a very great respect. In leaving the store one day, he accidentally dropped his staff,

and our May, with the lightness of a sylph, sprang before him, picked it up, and respectfully, yet with one of her most sparkling glances and winning smiles, placed it in the old man's hand. Nothing can be more flattering to age than unexpected attention paid them by the young and happy; and father Miller never forgot the pretty, bright-faced girl, who "did not laugh at him because he was lame." When he came to the store afterwards, he always brought some fragrant delicious offering from the garden or the fields — fruits and flowers of his own gathering, and finally our May found it very pleasant to extend her walks to father Miller's farm-house, drink of the new milk, admire the cheese, talk of economy with the old man's children, and engage in a frolic with his grand-children. Her condescension pleased the good people, while her mingled mirthfulness, sweetness and good sense charmed them.

These were the haymakers she had seemed so happy to meet; and the young man who had urged her stay was Mr. Day, father Miller's son-in-law. But this was not an invitation to the farm-house. A family of Irish laborers had, within a few days, begged to be admitted into an old log building that stood on father Miller's farm, and the good old man, thinking that he might assist them by giving them employment, had readily consented. But the O'Neils had travelled a long, weary way, and been obliged sometimes to sleep upon the damp ground; so that they were scarcely settled before the mother and two of the children were seized with a violent fever. Mr. Day was anxious that our May should just look in upon the sufferers; and she, with that excessive sensitiveness which often accompanies true benevolence, chose rather to incur censure for foolish waywardness than to explain her conduct. It is often found that those who seem to possess the lightest and gayest hearts, have the warmest love nestling down among the flowers. These beautiful characters pass through the world unostentatiously, seldom recognized but by the eye of Omniscience, loved by the angels, and sometimes making themselves dear to some holy-hearted saint,

near enough to heaven to see clearly the internal loveliness of the spirit.

Our May had still another motive for silence. She knew that if her cousin became aware of the situation of the family, she would call a meeting of the society, and the subject would be debated till assistance would come too late ; and she thought that advice and sympathy, with the products of father Miller's farm, and the physician whom the contents of her own purse might place at her command, would be quite as useful to the O'Neils as the Society's money. And then another *feeling* (it could scarce be called a motive) influenced our May, when she so unceremoniously sent home her companions wondering at her eccentricity. Mr. Melroy had always seemed to consider her a thoughtless, giddy child ; and when any benevolent plan was broached, he invariably turned to her cousin, as though he never dreamed of consulting her, or supposed it possible that she could be interested ; and she felt a kind of pleasure in concealing from him that "lower depth," where dwelt the sacred qualities which too often but bubble on the surface. In saying that our May was influenced by these considerations, I do not mean to say that she thought them over, or that she would have been able to present them intelligibly ; she acted from a momentary impulse, but the impelling principle was unconsciously made up of these motives.

"No," thought the sunny-hearted May, as she went tripping lightly homeward, after seeing the O'Neils comparatively comfortable, "No ; however lightly he may esteem me, he shall never think that I parade my goodness before his eyes for the sake of attracting his admiration." Then our pretty May began to wonder what the sober Mr. Melroy meant about her "linking a stronger chain ;" and she wondered on so absorbingly that she insensibly slackened her pace and almost forgot to enter when she reached her uncle's door.

The young clergyman was still in the parlor ; and although Miss May commenced the usual "My dear cousin, I feel it my duty to expostulate —" and although the expostulation

was no pleasanter than ever to our May, she did not avail herself of the usual "Mr. Melroy—" but sat dumb, with a roguishly demure expression, unparalleled by anything but the sometimes exceedingly wise air of a mischievous kitten.

"I think," said Mr. Melroy, endeavoring to smile, after Miss May had three several times appealed to him for his opinion, "I think that Miss Loomis (he had never called her Miss Loomis before) must be allowed to be the exclusive judge of her own actions, since she chooses to conceal her motives from her friends."

"Some people act without motive," interrupted Miss May. Mr. Melroy shook his head rather dissentingly.

"Light minds are guided by impulse," pursued Miss May. Mr. Melroy looked more determinedly and severely than ever, but made no reply.

"Impulse," observed Miss May, with a wondrously wise look, "is a very dangerous guide—don't you think so, Mr. Melroy?"

"The impulse of a bad heart."

"All hearts are depraved," continued Miss May, meekly folding her white hands, and turning her eyes to the carpet.

"All *happy* hearts," interposed our May.

The young clergyman nodded assent; but it was evident that his thoughts were elsewhere.

"If cousin May *would* be but a little more sober-minded!" pursued the Cloud, after a proper pause.

Mr. Melroy glanced at the blushing, half-trembling May, and appeared disconcerted.

"I know she means no harm—she is so thoughtless—but don't you really think her exceedingly indiscreet, Mr. Melroy?"

"Excuse me, Miss Loomis," said the young clergyman, with a manner of excessive embarrassment. "I—I have no right to question the young lady's discretion; and if I attempted an opinion I might speak too unguardedly."

"So then you are obliged to put a guard upon your tongue, lest I should learn that you consider me a giddy, thoughtless,

imprudent, heartless girl;" said our May, with hasty earnestness; "but it is unnecessary, Mr. Melroy; I knew your opinion of me long ago."

"Then you know—" began the young pastor, and he looked still more confused.

"Then why not improve?" asked Miss May, in her very kindest tone.

"Because," answered May, the incorrigible, half recovering her gayety, "because my most excellent cousin has goodness and discretion enough for both of us; or," she added, glancing upward, with a sweetly sobered expression of countenance, "because my Father gave me a happy heart and too many causes for gratitude to admit of its learning the lesson of sadness."

Mr. Melroy was about to answer, but he was interrupted, by a knock at the door; and our village physician entered in great haste.

"I come," said he to our May, "from O'Neil's — the poor woman is worse, and I am afraid she will not hold out much longer. I advised them to send for a clergyman; but she says no one can pray for her like the sweet young lady, who visited her to-night. So, my dear, if you will just jump into my carriage your face will do more good than my medicine."

Our May snatched her bonnet, without speaking a word, or glancing at the astonished faces beside her; and she was half way to O'Neil's, before she knew that Mr. Melroy was by her side, and still held the hand by which he had assisted her into the carriage. For some reason, though a tremor crept from the heart into that pretty prisoned hand, our May did not think proper to withdraw it; and soon all selfish thoughts were dissipated by the scene of misery upon which they entered. Mrs. O'Neil was already dead; and the Millers, in whose hands the kind-hearted physician had left her, were endeavoring to silence the clamors of the children, and striving all they could to comfort O'Neil, who, with true Irish eloquence, was pouring out his lamentations over the corpse of his wife.

"An' there 's the swate leddy who spake the kind word to me," said one of the noisy group, springing towards our May; "my mither said she was heaven's own angel, sure."

"Well, come to me," said our May, "and I will speak to you more kind words; poor things! you need them sorely."

The children gathered around the fair young girl, noisily at first; but, as she gradually gained their attention, their clamors ceased; and she at last made them consent to accompany father Miller to the farm-house where it was thought best for them to remain until after the funeral of their poor mother.

"And you will be very good and quiet," said our May, as the noisy troop were preparing to leave the hut.

"Sure an' we will," answered a bright boy, "if it be only for the sake of ye'r own beautiful face, Miss."

Mr. Melroy had succeeded in administering comfort to O'Neil, who at last consented to lie down and rest; and our May bent like the ministering angel that she was, over the sick couch of the two children, smoothing their pillows and bathing their temples.

"This is a wretched family," observed Mr. Melroy, turning to Mr. Day.

"Ay, but it would have been more wretched still, if it had n't been for our May. She came as willingly as the like of her would walk into her uncle's parlor, the minute I made her know how much she was needed; and all these little comforts are of her ordering. She sent, too, for Dr. Houghton, and left her purse with me to pay him; but Dr. Houghton says he can't take money from such an angel."

"Is she always so?" asked Melroy, in a low tone.

"Always so! Bless your heart, don't you know she's always so, and you the minister! Why, she is doing good all the time; she's kind to everybody; and no one can help loving her."

"No one can help it," answered Melroy, involuntarily, and glancing at our May, who was supporting the head of the

little sufferer on her hand, while she was directing Mrs. Day how to prepare the medicine.

After the sick children had been cared for, and it was ascertained that Mr. and Mrs. Day, with one of her sisters, would remain at O'Neil's during the night, Dr. Houghton, with Mr. Melroy and our May, took leave. The drive home was performed in silence; and young parson Melroy, after conducting our May to her uncle's door, pressed her hand, with a whispered "God bless you!" and turned away.

In less than a twelvemonth from the death of poor Mrs. O'Neil, very ominous preparations were going forward in the family mansion of 'Squire Loomis. They were ended, at last, by the introduction of our May to the pretty parsonage; and, although years have sobered her but slightly, though her happy heart has still "too many causes for gratitude to admit of its learning the lesson of sadness," and she still prefers to do good privately, her husband's is far from being the only heart or the only tongue to pronounce the "God bless you!"

THE WEAVER.

A WEAVER sat by the side of his loom,
 A flinging the shuttle fast ;
 And a thread that would wear till the hour of doom,
 Was added at every cast.

His warp had been by the angels spun,
 And his weft was bright and new,
 Like threads which the morning unbraids from the sun,
 All jewelled over with dew.

And fresh-lipped, bright-eyed, beautiful flowers
 In the rich soft web were bedded ;
 And blithe to the weaver sped onward the hours —
Not yet were Time's feet leaded !

But something there came slow stealing by,
 And a shade on the fabric fell ;
 And I saw that the shuttle less blithely did fly —
 For thought hath a wearisome spell !

And a thread that next o'er the warp was lain,
 Was of melancholy gray ;
 And anon I marked there a tear-drop's stain,
 Where the flowers had fallen away.

But still the weaver kept weaving on,
 Though the fabric all was gray ;
 And the flowers, and the buds, and the leaves were gone,
 And the golu threads cankered lay.

And dark — and still darker — and darker grew
 Each newly woven thread ;
 And some there were of a death-mocking hue —
 And some of a bloody red.

And things all strange were woven in,
Sighs, down-crushed hopes and fears ;
And the web was broken, and poor, and thin,
And it dripped with living tears.

And the weaver fain would have flung it aside,
But he knew it would be a sin ;
So in light and in gloom the shuttle he plied,
A weaving these life-cords in.

And as he wove, and, weeping, still wove,
A tempter stole him nigh ;
And, with glozing words, he to win him strove —
But the weaver turned his eye.

He upward turned his eye to heaven,
And still wove on — on — on !
Till the last, last cord from his heart was riven,
And the tissue strange was done.

Then he threw it about his shoulders bowed,
And about his grizzled head ;
And gathering close the folds of his shroud,
Lay him down among the dead.

And I after saw, in a *robe of light*,
The weaver in the sky ;
The angels' wings were not more bright,
And the stars grew pale it nigh.

And I saw 'mid the folds, all the Iris-hued flowers,
That beneath his touch had sprung ;
More beautiful far than these stray ones of ours,
Which the angels have to us flung.

And wherever a tear had fallen down,
Gleamed out a diamond rare ;
And jewels befitting a monarch's crown,
Were the foot-prints left by Care.

And wherever had swept the breath of a sigh,
Was left a rich perfume;
And with light from the fountain of bliss in the sky,
Shone the labor of Sorrow and Gloom.

And then I prayed, when my last work is done,
And the silver life-cord riven,
Be the stain of Sorrow the deepest one
That I bear with me to heaven!

SAVE THE ERRING!

THERE was bustle in the little dressing-room of young Ella Lane; a dodging about of lights, a constant tramping of a fat, good-natured serving-maid, a flitting of curious, smiling little girls, and a disarranging of drapery and furniture, not very often occurring in this quiet, tasteful corner. An arch-looking miss of twelve was standing before a basket of flowers, selecting the choicest, and studying carefully their arrangement, with parted lips and eyes demurely downcast; as though thinking of the time when the little fairy watching so intently by her side, would perform the same service for her. On the bed lay a light, fleecy dress of white, with silver cords and clusters of silver leaves, and sashes of a pale blue, and others of a still paler pink, and here and there a little wreath of flowers, or a small bunch of marabouts — in short, ornaments enough to crush one person, had their weight been at all proportioned to their bulk. Immediately opposite a small pier-glass, sat a girl of seventeen, in half undress, her full, round arms shaded only by a fold of linen at the shoulder, and her eye resting very complacently on the little foot placed somewhat ostentatiously upon an ottoman before her. And, indeed, that foot was a very dainty-looking thing, in its close-fitting slipper, altogether unequalled by anything but the finely curved and tapered ankle so fully revealed above it. Immediately behind the chair of the young lady, stood a fair, mild-looking matron; her slender fingers carefully thridding the masses of hair mantling the ivory neck and shoulders of her eldest daughter, preparatory to platting it into those long braids so well calculated to display the contour of a fine head. There was a smile upon the mother's lip, not like that dimpling at the corners of the mouth of the little bouquet-maker, but a pleased, gratified smile, and yet half-shadowed over by

a strange anxiety, that she seemed striving to conceal from her happy children. Sometimes her fingers paused in their graceful employment, and her eye rested vacantly wherever it chanced to fall; and then, with an effort, the listlessness passed, and the smile came back, though manifestly tempered by some heaviness clinging to the heart.

At last the young girl was arrayed; each braid in its place, and a wreath of purple buds falling behind the ear; her simple dress floating about her slight figure like an airy cloud, every fold arranged by a mother's careful fingers; her white kid gloves drawn upon her hands, and fan, bouquet and kerchief, all in readiness. The large, warm shawl had been carefully laid upon her shoulders, the mother's kiss was on her bright cheek, and a "don't stay late, dear," in her ear; she had shaken her fan at the saucy Nelly, and pinched the cheek of Rosa, and was now toying with little Susy's fingers, when the head of the serving-maid was again thrust in at the door, to hasten the arrangements. Ella tripped gaily down stairs, but when she reached the bottom, she paused.

"I am sorry to go without you, mamma."

"I am sorry that you must, dear; but I hope you will find it very pleasant."

"It will be pleasant, I have no doubt; but, mamma, I am afraid that you are not quite well, or, perhaps," she whispered, "you have something to trouble you; if so, I should like very much to stay with you."

"No, dear; I am well, quite well, and —" Mrs. Lane did not say *happy*, for the falsehood died on her lip; but she smiled so cheerily, and her eye looked so clear and bright as it met her daughter's, that Ella took it for a negative.

"Ah! I see how it is, mamma; you are afraid my new frock is prettier than any of yours; and you don't mean to be outshone by little people. Do you know, I shall tell Mrs. Witman all about it?"

"I will let you tell anything that you choose, so that you do not show too much vanity; but don't stay late. Good-night, darling."

"Good-night, till sleeping-time, mamma." And, with a light laugh, Ella Lane left her mother's side and sprang into the carriage.

When Mrs. Lane turned from the door, the smile had entirely disappeared, and an expression of anxious solicitude occupied its place. While the joyous children went bounding on before her, she paused beneath the hall lamp, and pulling a scrap of paper from her bosom, read—

"Do not go out to-night, dear mother; I *must* see you. He will not come in before eleven—I will be with you at ten."

It was written in a hurried, irregular hand, and was without signature; but it needed none.

"My poor, poor boy!" murmured the now almost weeping mother, as she crushed the paper in her hand and laid it back upon her heart. "It may be wrong to deceive HIM so: but how can a mother refuse to see the son she has carried in her arms and nursed upon her bosom? Poor Robert!"

Ay, poor Robert, indeed! the only son of one of the proudest and wealthiest citizens of New York, and yet without a shelter for his head!

Mr. Lane had lived a bachelor until the age of forty-two, when he married a beautiful girl of eighteen; the mother whom we have already introduced to our readers. She was gentle and complying; hence, the rigid sternness of his character, which so many years of loneliness had by no means tended to soften, seldom had an opportunity to exhibit itself. But the iron was all there, though buried for a time in the flowers which love had nursed into bloom above it. The eldest of their children was a boy; a frank, heartsome, merry fellow—a lamb to those who would condescend to lead him by love; but exhibiting, even in infancy, an indomitable will, that occasioned the young mother many an anxious foreboding. But as the boy grew toward manhood, a new and deeper cause for anxiety began to appear. To Robert's gayety were added other qualities that made him a fascinating companion; his society was constantly sought, first by the families in

which his parents were on terms of intimacy, and then by others, and still others, till Mrs. Lane began to tremble lest among her son's associates might be found some of exceptionable character. By degrees he spent fewer evenings at home, went out with her less frequently, and accounted for his absence less satisfactorily. Then she spoke to him upon the subject, and received his assurance that all was well, that she need not be troubled about his falling into bad company.

But she *was* troubled.

There was at evening a wild sparkle in the boy's eye, and an unnatural glow upon his cheek, that told of unhealthy excitement; but in the morning it was all gone, and his gaiety, sometimes his cheerfulness, fled with it. Oh! what sickness of heart can compare with that indefinable fear, that foreshadowing of evil, which will sometimes creep in between our trust and our love; while we dare not show to the object of it, much less to others, anything but a smiling lip and a serene brow. Mrs. Lane was anxious, but she confined her anxiety to her own bosom; not even whispering it to her husband, lest he should ridicule it on the one hand, or, on the other, exercise a severity which should lead to a collision. But matters grew worse and worse constantly; Robert was now seldom home till late at night, and then he came heated and flurried, and hastened away to bed, as though his mother's loving eye were a monitor he could not meet. She sought opportunities to warn him, as she had formerly done, but he feared and evaded them; and so several more weeks passed by—weeks of more importance than many a life-time. Finally Mrs. Lane became seriously alarmed, and consulted her husband.

"I have business with you to-night, Robert," said Mr. Lane, pointedly, as the boy was going out after dinner, "and will see you in the library at nine o'clock."

"I—I—have—an engagement, sir. If some other hour—"

"No other hour will do. You have no engagement that will be allowed to interfere with those I make for you."

Robert was about to answer — perhaps angrily — when he caught a glimpse of his mother. Her face was of an ashy hue, and a large tear was trembling in her eye. He turned hastily away and hurried along the hall; but before he reached the street door, her hand was upon his arm, and she whispered in his ear, “Meet your father at nine, as he has bidden you, Robert; and do not — for my sake, for your mother’s sake, dear Robert — do not say anything to exasperate him.”

“Do not fear, mother,” he answered, in a subdued tone; then, as the door closed behind him, he muttered, “he will be exasperated enough with little saying, if his business is what I suspect. What a fool I have been — mad — mad! I wish I had told him at first, without waiting to be driven to it; but now — well, I will make one more attempt — desperate it must be — and then, if the worst comes, he will only punish *me*; that I can bear patiently, for I deserve it; but it would kill my poor mother — oh! he *must not* tell her!”

Mrs. Lane started nervously at every ring of the door-bell that evening; and when at nine she heard it, she could not forbear stepping into the hall to see who was admitted. It was her husband; and only waiting to inquire of the girl if Mr. Robert had yet come in, he passed on to the library. Mrs. Lane found it more difficult than ever to sustain conversation; she became abstracted, nervous; and when, at last, her few evening visitors departed, she was so manifestly relieved, that Ella inquired, in surprise, if anything had been said or done to annoy her. It was past ten, and Robert had not yet appeared. Finally the bell was pulled violently, and she hastened to the door herself. With livid lip and blood-shot eye, her son stepped to the threshold; and, starting at sight of her, he hurried away to the library, without giving her another glance. How slowly passed the moments to the waiting mother! How she longed to catch but a tone of those voices, both so loved; that she might know whether they sounded in confidence or anger! What Robert’s course had been she could not guess; but she knew that he would be

required to give a strict account of himself; and she dreaded the effect of her husband's well-known severity. A few minutes passed, (they seemed an age to her,) and then she heard the door of the library thrown open; and, a moment after, a quick, light step sounded upon the stairs. It was Robert's.

"You are not going out again, my son?" she inquired.

"Father will tell you why I go, dear mother," said the boy, pausing, and pressing her hand affectionately. "I must not wait to answer questions now." He passed on till he reached the door, then turning back, whispered, "Be at Mrs. Hinman's to-morrow evening, mother," and before she had time to ask a question or utter an exclamation of surprise, he had disappeared up the street.

But poor Mrs. Lane was soon made acquainted with the truth. Mr. Lane was somewhat vexed with himself for not perceiving his son's tendency to error before; and, like many another, he seemed resolved to make up in decision what he had lost by blindness. It was this which had occasioned his sharpness when he made the appointment, and he considered his dignity compromised when nine o'clock passed and his son seemed resolved on acting in open disobedience to his command. An hour's ruminating on the subject did not tend to soften his feelings; and when, at last, the culprit appeared, he was in a mood for anything but mercy. He demanded peremptorily a full confession; and Robert gave it. He did not color, soften, nor extenuate; but boldly — too boldly, perhaps — declaring that he scorned falsehood, he told the whole. He had fallen into gay society, then into vicious; and he was not the one to occupy a minor position anywhere. Wit and wine seduced him; and in an evil hour he sat down to the gaming-table. He had played at first for a trivial stake, then more deeply, and to-night, in the hope of retrieving his bad fortune, he had plunged in almost past extrication. At any time Mr. Lane would have been shocked; now he was exasperated, and spoke bitterly. At first Robert did not retort, for he had come in resolved on confession and reformation; but finally repentance was drowned in anger, and he answered

as a son, particularly an erring son, should not. Then a few more words ensued, unreasonable on both sides; Mr. Lane asserting that debts so contracted were dishonest ones, and should not be paid; and Robert declaring that they *should* be paid, if he gamed his lifelong to win the money; till, finally, the old man's rage became uncontrollable. It was in obedience to his father's command that Robert left his home that night, with the order never to cross the threshold again.

For two or three weeks, Mrs. Lane, now and then, of an evening, met her son at the houses of her friends; and then he disappeared almost entirely. While she could meet him, and speak a few words, even in a gay party, and perceive that he regarded her with as much affection as ever, she continued strong in the hope of final reformation and reconciliation; but when, evening after evening, she carried a hoping heart abroad, and dragged home a disappointed one, imagination busied itself with a thousand horrors. Her first-born, her only son, the darling of her young heart, her pride in the first years of wedded life, he whom she had loved so fondly, and cherished so tenderly—to what vice, what suffering, might not he be exposed! Then she had no confidant, no friend to sympathize with or encourage her. Since the first disclosure, she had never mentioned Robert's name to her husband, and Ella knew only that some angry words had estranged her father and brother for a time; she was enviably ignorant of Robert's guilt and danger.

The evening on which our story commences, Mrs. Lane had intended to spend abroad with her daughter; but had been prevented by the receipt of the note above mentioned. Robert had never been home since he was commanded to leave it; and though anxious both about the cause and result, she could not but be rejoiced at the thought of seeing him again in her own private sitting-room. She had many things, too, to learn. She wished to know where he lived, how he supported himself, and what were his intentions for the future. And she wished to expostulate with and advise him;—in

short, her mother's heart told her that everything could be done in that one evening.

While Mrs. Lane walked up and down her little sitting-room, wishing that ten o'clock would come, her son entered his small, scantily furnished apartment in a decent boarding-house, and throwing himself upon the only chair within it, he covered his face with his hands. For a long time he sat in this position; then he arose, and taking down a pocket-pistol, examined it carefully, primed it, and laid it beneath his pillow. Immediately, however, he took it out, charged it heavily, and laying it on the table, folded his arms and gazed upon it, muttering, "It may be needed when I least expect it. I have one friend, at least, while this is by." After pacing two or three times across the narrow space between his bed-head and the little window at the foot, he opened the door of a small closet, and taking thence a cloak and muffler, carefully adjusted them; then slouching a broad-brimmed hat over his eyes, he hurried down the stairs into the street. Two or three times Robert Lane paused and reasoned with himself, before he reached his father's door; and even when his hand was extended to the bell-knob, he hesitated.

"I must see her, at any risk," he at last exclaimed, pulling lightly upon the cord.

The girl started when she opened the door, but gave no other token of recognition. Robert inquired for Mrs. Lane; and following after the girl, found himself in the back sitting-room, remembered but too, too fondly for his composure. As soon as the door closed behind him, he cast off his muffings, and throwing himself upon a little ottoman at his mother's feet, leaned his forehead on her knees.

"Is it any new trouble, Robert?" she inquired, tenderly, and laying her hand gently on his head, "any new—*guilt*?" she whispered, bending her lips close to his ear, and placing the other arm over his neck.

"Tell your mother, Robert—tell her everything—she may help you—she will—oh, Robert! you know she will love you, and cling to you through it all!"

The boy raised his head, and now she saw, for the first time, the change that had come over him. His face was haggard, his eye sunk and bloodshot, that round, rosy cheek, which her lip had loved to meet, had grown pale and thin, and, in place of the gay, careless smile, had risen looks of anxiety and bitterness.

"I shall break your heart, mother," he said, sorrowfully, "and poor little Ella's, too. Oh! it is a dreadful thing to murder those one loves best. I never meant to do it—try to believe that, dear mother, whatever comes."

"I do believe it, Robert."

"Ah! you know only a small part yet; but I could not go away without seeing and telling you. I knew you would learn it from others, and I wanted to hear you say you could love me after all. I knew you would, but I wanted to hear you *say* it."

"I will, Robert, I will; but surely you have nothing worse to tell than I know already!"

The boy looked down; his lip quivered, and the large purple veins upon his forehead worked themselves into knots, and rose and fell as though ready to burst at every throb.

She passed her hand soothingly over them.

"Whatever it is, Robert, you are not before a harsh judge now. Tell it to your mother, my darling boy; perhaps she can assist, advise—she certainly can *love* you through all."

"Oh, mother! you must not speak so, or I can never tell you. If you talk like this—if you do not blame me, I shall almost wish I had gone away without seeing you. Oh! if I had only listened to you six months ago! but they flattered me, and I was foolish, I was wicked. But I thought of you all the time, mother—of you and Ella—and I promised myself, every night when I went to my pillow, that I would break away from the things that were entangling me, and become all that you desired. I was not conscious then of doing anything decidedly wrong; but I knew that my companions were not such as you would approve, and I knew—I could but know—that I was too much intoxicated by their

flatteries. At last I resorted to cards; I played very cautiously at first, and only to do as others did, then for larger sums, and again still larger; till finally it became my sole object to recover the moneys I had lost, and thus prevent the necessity of applying to my father for more. I still lost, and still went on, till finally the discovery, which, I believe, dear mother, all in kindness, you brought about, was made. Perhaps I was in the wrong, but, mother, it *did* seem to me dishonorable to refuse to pay those debts which —”

“Your father was angry, or he would not have refused. You tried his patience, Robert, and then, I fear, you were more bold than conciliatory.”

“I made one more attempt to better my fortunes that evening, and the time passed before I was aware of it; I promised — I told *them* — those scoffers, mother — that it was my last evening among them; I promised myself so, and repeated it to my father; and I would have kept my promise — *I would*. But you know how it turned. Then I was desperate.”

Mrs. Lane trembled, and passed her arm caressingly about his neck, as though to reassure him. “I met you several times after that, Robert, and you did not seem so very unhappy.”

“I was determined to have the money, mother, and I got it.”

“How, Robert?”

“Not honestly.”

The boy’s voice was low and husky; and his hand, as it closed over his mother’s while his forehead again rested on her knees, was of a death-like chilliness.

A faintness came over her, a horrid feeling went curdling round her heart, and she felt as though her breath was going away from her. But the cold hand was freezing about hers, the throbbing forehead rested on her knees, and every sob, as it burst forth uncontrolledly, fell like a crushing weight upon her bosom. It was the mother’s pitying heart, that, subduing its own emotions, enabled her again to articulate, though in a low whisper, “*How*, Robert?”

“By forgery. No matter for the particulars — I could not

tell them now, and you could not hear. To-morrow all will be discovered, and I must escape. Such fear, such agony — oh, mother! what have I not endured? No punishment men can inflict will ever be half so heavy. I deserve it, though — all, and ten thousand times more. But I never meant it should come to this, mother; believe me, I never did. I meant to pay it before now, and I thought I could. I have won some money, but not half — scarce a tithe of what I ought to have, so there is nothing left but flight and disgrace. You do not answer me, mother; I knew I should break your heart, I knew —”

Mrs. Lane made a strong effort, and murmured brokenly,
 “To-morrow — to-morrow! Oh! my poor, ruined boy!”

“I know that after deeds cannot compensate, mother; but if a life of rectitude, if —” Robert paused suddenly and started to his feet. “I know that step, mother!”

“Hush, my son, hush!” Mrs. Lane had time for no more before her husband entered the apartment. A cloud instantly overspread his countenance.

“You here, sirrah! What business brings you to the home you have desecrated?”

“I came to see my mother, sir.”

“Nay,” interposed the lady, anticipating the storm that seemed gathering on her husband’s brow, “let the fault be mine. He is my own child, and I *must* see him — a little while — you cannot refuse to leave me a little while with my own boy.”

“It is the last time, then,” said Mr. Lane, sternly.

“The last time!” echoed Robert, in a tone of mocking bitterness.

“The last time!” whispered the white lips of the mother, as though she had but that moment comprehended it; and, as the door closed upon the retreating form of her husband, she slid to the floor, lightly and unresistingly. Robert did not attempt to call for assistance; but he raised her head to his bosom, and covered her pale face with his boyish tears.

“I have killed her! my poor, poor mother!” he sobbed.

"That *I* should be such a wretch! *I!* *her* son!— with all her care and with all her love! Oh! if they had but given me a coffin for a cradle! A grave *then* would have been a blessed thing; but it is too late now, too late!"

Mrs. Lane was awakened by the warm tears raining upon her face; and, starting up wildly, she entreated him to be gone. "Every moment is precious!" she exclaimed, gaspingly. "You may not make your escape if you do not go now. Oh, Robert! promise me— on your knees, before your mother, and in the sight of your God, promise, my poor boy, that you *will* forsake the ways of vice, that you *will* become an honorable and a useful man— promise this, Robert, and then go! Your mother, who has gloried, who has doted on you, entreats you to be gone from her forever!"

"I cannot go to-night, mother. I waited to see you, and so lost the opportunity; but there is no danger. It is too late to take a boat now. I shall go to some of the landings above when I leave here, and in the morning go aboard the first boat that passes."

Again the mother required the promise of reformation; and it was given earnestly and solemnly. Then he again sat down on the ottoman at her feet; and, with one hand laid lovingly upon his head, and the other clasped in both of his, she spent an hour in soothing, counselling, and admonishing him. So deeply were both engaged, that neither the merry voice of Ella in the door-way, nor her step along the hall, reached them.

"Has my mother retired?" was her first inquiry.

"No, miss; she is in the back sitting-room," and before the girl could add that she was engaged with a stranger, Ella had bounded to the door, and flung it wide open.

"Robert!—*you* here, Robert! If I had only known it, I should have been home long ago. So you are sorry you quarrelled with papa, and you have come back to be a good boy, and go out with me when I want a nice beau, and all that! Well, it *does* look natural to see you here."

As the young girl spoke she cast hood and shawl upon the

floor ; and, with one bared arm thrown carelessly over her brother's shoulder, she crouched at her mother's feet, looking into her eyes with an expression which seemed to say, " Now tell me all about it. You must have had strange doings this evening."

But neither Mrs. Lane nor Robert spoke. The boy only strained his sister convulsively to his heart ; while the poor mother covered her own face with her hands to hide the tears, which, nevertheless, found their way between her jewelled fingers.

The eyes of the fair girl turned from one to another in amazement ; then, pressing her lips to the cheek of her brother, she whispered,

" What is it, Robin ? Has papa refused to let you come back ? I will ask him ; I will tell him you must come, and then you will, for he never refused me anything. Don't cry, mamma ; I will go up stairs now, and have it settled. Papa cannot say no to me, of course, for I have on the very dress he selected himself, and he said I should be irresistible in it. I will remind him of that."

" Alas ! my poor Ella !" sobbed Mrs. Lane, " this trouble is too great for you to settle. Our Robert has come home now for the last time — we part from him to-night forever."

" Forever !" and Ella's cheek turned as pale as the white glove which she raised to push back the curls from her forehead.

" Yes, *forever*," answered Robert, calmly, " I will tell you all about it, Ella. You seem not to know that it was something worse than a quarrel which lost me my home. I had contracted debts — improperly, wickedly — and my father refused to pay them. I obtained the money for the purpose, and now, Ella, I must escape or — or —"

" How did you get the money, Robert ?"

The boy answered in a whisper.

" You !" exclaimed Ella, springing to her feet and speaking almost scornfully ; "*you*, Robert Lane ! *my* brother ! Is it so, mamma ? is my brother a villain, a forger, is he —"

"Hush, Ella, hush!" interrupted Mrs. Lane. "It is for those who have hard hearts to condemn — not for thee, my daughter. There will be insults enough heaped upon his poor head to-morrow — let him at least have love and pity here."

"Pity! Whom did he pity or love when he deliberately —"

"Ella! Ella!" again interposed Mrs. Lane, almost sternly.

"Nay, mother," said the boy, in a tone of touching mournfulness, "do not blame poor Ella. She does right to despise me. I have outraged her feelings, and disgraced her name. *She* deserves pity, and she will need it, when people point at her and say what her brother is. *I* have forfeited all claim even to that. Oh, mother! why did you not let me die in that last sickness? it would have saved a world of woe."

Ella stood for a moment, her head erect, and her lip white and tremulous, while tears came crowding to her eyes, and her face worked with emotion; the next she threw herself into the arms of her brother.

"Forgive me, Robin! my own dear, darling brother! I *do* pity you! I *do* love you, and will forever! But, oh! it is a horrible thing to be a forger's sister! I cannot forget that, Robert, and I *must* say it, if it break your heart to hear me, it is horrible! horrible!"

"It *is* horrible, Ella; I never thought to bring it upon you, but —"

"Why are you here, Robert? Will they not find you, and drag you — oh, mamma! where shall we hide him? — what *can* we do?"

It was several minutes before Ella could be made to comprehend the absence of immediate danger; and then she insisted on hearing all the particulars of the crime, even though poor Robert appeared to be on the rack while giving them. She loved her brother dearly, and was distressed for him; but she thought too of herself, and the disgrace of her family; hers was not a mother's meek, affectionate heart; a mother's all-enduring, self-sacrificing nature. At last she started up eagerly.

"The disgrace may be avoided; papa will of course shield his own name; I will go to him directly."

"But the sin, my child, the conscious degradation?" inquired Mrs. Lane, with reproof in her mild eye. "What will you do with that, Ella?"

"Poor Robert!" whispered the girl, again folding her white arms about him; "he is sorry for what he has done; and our kind Heavenly Father is more ready to forgive than we. You will never do such a wicked thing again, dear Robin, will you?"

Robert answered only by convulsive sobs, and Ella, too, sobbed for a few moments in company; then, suddenly breaking away from him, she hurried up the stairs. Along the hall she went, as fast as her trembling feet could carry her, and past the room in which she had been so happy while willing hands decorated her pretty person; but when she reached her father's door, she paused in dread. She could hear his heavy, monotonous tramp as he walked up and down the room; and, remembering his almost repulsive sternness, she dreaded meeting him. "If I had only known it before," thought Ella, "all might have been avoided; but now it is almost too much to ask." A fresh burst of tears had no tendency to calm her; and she could scarce support her trembling frame, when, repeating to herself, "he *must* be saved!" she gathered courage to open the door. The old man paused in his promenade, and fixed his troubled eye sternly on the intruder, while Ella rushed forward, and, twining her arms about him, buried her face in his bosom.

"Oh! I am *so* wretched!" she exclaimed, all her courage forsaking her on the instant; and then she sobbed, as Mr. Lane had never supposed *his* daughter could. But he did not attempt to quiet her; he only drew her closer to him, as though he would thus have shielded her from the wretchedness that was bursting her young heart. At last Ella broke forth, "Come down and see Robert, papa; come and save him. They will drag him away to prison for forgery, and you will be the father of a condemned criminal, and I his

sister. Oh! do not let him go away from us so, papa — come down and see him, and you *will* pity him — you cannot help it."

"Forgery, Ella! he has not —"

"*He has!* and you must save him, papa, for your own sake, for all our sakes."

"Do you *know* this, Ella? It is not true — it is a miserable subterfuge to wheedle money from his mother — money to squander among the vile wretches whom he has preferred to us. No; send him back to his dissolute —"

"Is that the way to make him better, papa?" inquired Ella, raising her head and fixing her sparkling eye upon him resolutely. "You sent him back to them before; you shut him away from yourself and from mamma — you closed the door upon my only brother — there was none by to say, 'take care, Robin,' none to give him a smile but those who were leading him to ruin; and no wonder that they have made him what he is. Be careful, papa. Robert has committed a crime, a dreadful crime; but it was when *you*, who *should* have prevented it, had shut your heart against him, when we, who *might* have prevented it, were obliged to go abroad to see him, and then could give him no more than a few stolen words. It was not just to keep me in ignorance so long, for he is my own brother, and only one little year older than I; but I know all about it now, and if Robert is put in prison, I had almost as lief be in his place as yours."

"Ella! Ella!"

"I should, papa. I know that one like you cannot do wrong without feeling remorse; and when you reflect that poor Robert might have been saved, if you had only had more patience with him, you will never sleep peacefully again."

"Ella, my child," said the old man, cowering in spite of himself, "what has come over you? Who has set you up to talk in this way to your father? I suppose I am to be answerable for this impertinence, too."

"Oh, papa! you know this is not impertinence. I have a right to say it, for the love I bear my only brother; you know

that my own heart is all which has set me up to it, and your heart, dear papa, is saying the same thing. You *must* forgive Robert, and you *must* save him and us the disgrace of an exposure."

"I will avert the disgrace while I have the power, Ella, but that will not be long, if he goes on at this rate. Do you know the amount of money he asks?"

"*He* asks none — I ask for him the sum that you refused before."

"Ah! he has gained the victory, then. Well, tell him to enjoy his villanous triumph. Give him that, and say to him, that if he has any decency left he will drop a name which has never been stained but by him, and leave us to the little peace we may glean, after he has trampled our best feelings under foot."

"Thank you, papa; and may I not tell him you forgive him?"

"No!"

"That you pity him?"

"No!"

"May I not say that when he is reformed he may come back to us, and be received with open arms and hearts?"

"Say nothing but what I bid you, and go!"

Ella turned away with a sigh. She had scarcely closed the door when a deep, heavy groan broke upon her ear, and she paused. Another and another followed, so heart-rending, so agonized, that she grew faint with fear. For a moment her hand trembled upon the latch; and then she raised it, and, gliding up to her father, folded her arms about him, and pressed her lips to his.

"Forgive me, dear papa, forgive your own Ella her first unkind words. I was thinking only of poor Robert, and did not well know what I said. I am sorry — very sorry — cannot you forgive me, papa?"

"Yes, child, yes. Good-night, darling! — there, go!"

"And Robert?"

No answer.

"You will feel better if you see him, papa."

"Go! go!"

Again Ella turned from the door and hurried down the stairs. Still the boy sat with his face in his mother's lap, and his arms twined about her waist. Both started at sight of her slight figure, dressed, as it was, for a different scene from this. The pale, anxious face, looking out from the rich masses of curls now disarranged and half drawn back behind her ear, appeared as though long years had passed over it in that one half hour. Poor Ella! it was a fearful ordeal for glad, buoyant seventeen.

"There is the money, Robert," she said, flinging the purse upon the table, "and now you must go back with me and say to our father that you are sorry you have made him miserable."

"He will turn me from the door, Ella."

"And do you not deserve it?"

"Ella!" interposed the tender mother.

"I do; that and more. But perhaps he will think I come to mock him."

"Your manner and words will tell him for what you come. You have very nearly killed our poor father, Robert. I have seen his grey hairs to-night almost as low as the grave will lay them. I have seen him in such agony as none of us are capable of enduring. You ought to go to him, Robert—go on your knees, and, whatever he says to you, you will have no right to complain."

"Ella, child! Ella!" exclaimed Mrs. Lane. "You have too much of your father's spirit—that is, too much for a woman. Beware how you 'break the bruised reed.'"

"Ella is right, mother," said the boy, rising. "I will go to him—I will tell him how wretched I have made myself; how I wish that I could take the whole load of wretchedness, and relieve those I love. I will promise him to look out some humble corner of the earth and hide myself in it, away from his sight forever. Perhaps he will bid me earn his confidence by years of rectitude—*perhaps* he will, but, if he does not,

Ella is right — whatever he says to me, if he curse me, I shall have no right to complain."

"But *I* will complain, Robin!" exclaimed the girl, with a fresh burst of tears; "and wherever you go, I will go with you. Poor, dear papa! But he shall not separate us—we, who have sat upon his knee at the same time—his own darling children! I will never stay here while you are without a home, Robin."

The excited girl clasped both hands over her brother's arm, and led the way up stairs; while the trembling mother followed, praying in her heart that the interview might terminate more favorably than her fears promised.

When they entered Mr. Lane's room, the old man sat in his armed chair, leaning over a table, and resting his forehead upon his clasped hands. Books were scattered around, but they had evidently not been used that evening; there was a glass of water standing beside him, and his neck-cloth was loosened as though from faintness. Had his hair become greyer, and his vigorous frame bended within a few days? It certainly seemed so; and the heart of the erring boy was stricken at the sight. The sorrow that he had brought upon his mother and sister had been duly weighed; but his stern father had never been reckoned among the sufferers.

A loud, convulsive sob burst from his bosom, and he threw himself, without a word, at the old man's feet. The mother drew near and joined her son; meanwhile, raising her pale face pleadingly to her husband's; and Ella, first kissing her father's hand, and bathing it with a shower of warm tears, placed it on Robert's head.

"You forgive him, papa—you forgive poor Robin? He shall never act wickedly again; and he is your only son."

The old man strove to speak, but the words died in his throat; again he made a strong effort, but emotion overmastered him; and, sliding from his chair into the midst of the group, he extended his arms, enclosing all of them, and, bowing his head to the shoulder of his son, wept aloud.

"Stay with us, Robert!" he at last said; "we can none of

us live without you. Stay, and make yourself worthy of the love that forgives so much !”

Men never knew by what a very hair had once hung Robert Lane's welfare ; that a mere breath alone had stood between him and ignominy. Years after, when he was an honored and respected citizen, adorning his brilliant talents by virtues as rare as they were ennobling, no one knew why he should turn ever to the erring with encouraging words. The key-stone of his generous forbearance was buried in the hearts of three, and they all loved him. It was buried ; but yet a white-haired old man, who watched his course with an eagle-eye, and followed his footsteps dotingly, receiving always the most refined and deferential attention, might often have been heard muttering to himself, with proud and wondering affection, “ ‘ This my son was dead and is alive again ; he was lost and is found.’ ”

MY UNCLE STILLING.

"I WOULD N'T take the liberty to say it, but that I like you, Doctor," said Squire Boulter to my Uncle Stilling, "I would n't say it, but that I like you; but, really, to see a man of your talent wasting life in this way is enough to make the very stones cry out."

"I am never idle, Squire."

"Perhaps not; but you do such useless things, and so much for other people. A man ought to think a little of his own flesh and blood, now and then."

"I look well to the wants of my family, I am sure."

Squire Boulter shook his head.

"They never go hungry."

"Oh, of course not."

"Nor cold."

"I have n't charged you with being an unfeeling man, Doctor; I know you provide for your family comfortably — comfortably in one sense — though I think something beside food and clothing necessary to comfort; but remember the 'rainy day' — the 'rainy day,' Doctor."

"That will be quite sufficient when it comes. 'The morrow will take thought for the things of itself,' says the Scripture; and I do not wish to hasten, by premature care, the evil day."

"Ah, but Doctor, that is the sluggard's creed."

"The text I have given you?"

"Your application of it. Just use a little common sense, sharpened by your own observation. Supposing you should be taken dangerously ill — say to-morrow?"

"I have plenty of medicine."

"And be for six months helpless?"

"Mistress Stilling is an admirable nurse; as I believe you have had occasion to know."

"Yes, yes; but that is not what I mean. What then would support your family?"

"I have two boys, Squire, sturdy, industrious fellows, with strong hands and strong hearts; and, under God, these are my dependance, if he should send upon me the calamity you mention."

"Humph! wild Harry and little Will! They're handsome, gay-hearted lads, truly, Doctor; but I should as soon think of putting your Sue, pretty dove, down at work, as little Willy, with his white face and long curls; and as for Hal, he would make the very hay-cocks turn somersets. Why, you have no idea, Doctor, of the crazy head that boy carries about with him."

"I never held a rod of iron over the lads, to be sure; and they might possibly be the better, now and then, for a little more restraint; but I believe there are few thoughts enter their young heads that I don't know all about. Harry may have some boisterous ways, but his heart is as soft as little Susy's, and — well, well; it don't become me to boast of my children. They are what they are, and have their faults, of course; though, I must say, I think I have no reason to be ashamed of them."

"They are fine boys, truly; and it is a great pity that they should be brought up in ignorance."

"Ignorance!" My Uncle Stilling opened his large blue eyes in perfect amazement. "My children are considered pretty intelligent, I believe, Squire."

"Oh, certainly, certainly; but how are they to be educated?"

"By means of study, and observation, and practice. They are in a pretty good course of training now."

"Don't you mean to give them a collegiate education, Doctor?"

"Probably I shall."

"But that will cost money; and you acknowledge that you do not lay by a penny."

"The morrow will take thought for the things of itself," repeated my Uncle Stilling.

"Stark mad, Doctor! stark mad!" exclaimed Squire Boulter, impatiently. "Do you expect a shower of gold to rain down from heaven, for your own especial use, just at the moment you want it?"

"I don't expect ever to want it, Squire."

"How is Harry to get through college?"

"I need n't think of that these three years yet."

"Incorrigible!" breathed Squire Boulter, between his closed lips, leaning at the same time against the wall, as in deep vexation. There was no kind of use, however, in getting vexed with my Uncle Stilling, and he soon returned to the attack. "Look'ee, Doctor, there's my wheat-field. Supposing I had said, last spring, 'the morrow will take thought for the things of itself,' and so refused to prepare the ground or sow the seed, where now would have been my flourishing crop?"

The Squire thought this was a poser, and he rubbed his hands together, and looked about him with an air of the most triumphant satisfaction. My Uncle Stilling only smiled.

"Eh! what d'ye say to that, Doctor?"

"Why, you would n't have deserved a crop. It was the work of *that day*—last spring's duty—to sow the seed. If you had put it over to another day, you would have 'loaded the morrow with a burden not its own;' and if you had done to-morrow's work, and reaped your first blades, or left your plough to whet the sickle, you would have been as mad as you have been trying to render me."

"Your comparison is not a fair one, Doctor; it would n't bear—"

"Granted! My comparison is just about as clumsy as your own; and neither of them would do much towards helping us to truth. We are not the men to flourish rhetoric, and shall do best if we confine ourselves to sober facts."

"To facts, then, Doctor! If you persist in not carrying out the advantageous plan I have suggested—"

"Whew!"

"It *would be* advantageous!"

"To poor Miller?"

"To *you*."

"Well, he wants the farm, and I don't."

"You might get a tenant; and the profits, without any trouble to yourself, would take Harry through college."

"And Miller?"

"He must look out for himself. Every man for himself, and success to the sharpest."

"Success to the truest and the neediest, say I."

"Well, with your two boys, I don't see but you need the farm about as much as Miller; and though, to be sure, you don't like to be praised, I wonder where 's the neighbor who would speak his name in the same day with yours, for goodness."

"I should be a villain, though, to deprive him of his rights."

"Well, that depends upon the way you view the matter."

"There is but one way I should care to view it—a straightforward, honest way."

"I hope you don't think I would recommend anything dishonest, Doctor?"

"Um! there are different notions about things."

"And your notions, let me tell you, are not business notions, at all."

"But they would lead me to do as I would be done by."

"Now, in this case, your squeamishness really leads you to do a wrong to your children. Miller's farm is in fact your own property. You have the law on your side, and if you should carry your account into any court of justice—"

"Then I will go home and burn my accounts. God forbid that I should keep anything under my roof possessing the power to deprive an unfortunate man of his just rights."

"There are but few men like you, Doctor."

"There are not many who would act differently in this case, I trust."

"Ah, well-a-day! If the world were all so—but it is n't—it is n't, my dear Doctor; and such men as you fare hard in it."

"Doctor Stilling is a fool," said Squire Boulter to his gay lady wife, about an hour afterwards.

"I have always thought so," was the quiet response.

"Mad! stark mad!"

"And yet you have worried me to death about calling on his dowdy wife, and —"

"They are strange people, I acknowledge it; and yet I can't help liking them. If he *would* exercise a little common sense!"

"If there is a man on earth whom I perfectly detest, Maggy, it is Squire Boulter," said my Uncle Stilling, settling himself comfortably in his leather-cushioned chair, with a volume of Seneca in his hand, and a pipe between his lips.

"Detest! Why, I thought that you and the Squire were great friends. You always stand up for him, I am sure, when I just happen to mention any of his faults."

"Ay, Maggy; the Squire is a good neighbor—a very good neighbor—I will say that for him, any day; and a kind man, too, he is—sometimes; but his knavish spirit I do detest."

"Then you do think he is knavish," said my aunt, her bright little black eyes twinkling with a rather naughty kind of satisfaction. "When I said it, the day Mrs. Boulter flourished her elegant new cashmere, you thought I went quite too far, and laid it all to envy."

"Ah, Maggy, dear! and did n't I name the cause aright? But I will give thee a better one now. If a sight of Madam Boulter's finery could stir thee up to say severe things of her husband, what wouldst thou think, Maggy, of an attempt to make me just such another unprincipled villain?"

My aunt seemed much less shocked at the mention of the diabolical scheme than her good lord had anticipated; her only reply being, "Pretty hard names for a neighbor to make use of, Walter Stilling."

"Ay, they are hard names, Maggy; and really I must learn to think more before I speak; but still I am not sure

that they are undeserved. We all have our faults though, and—well—yes—I am glad you checked me, Maggy. The Squire may be no worse than the rest of us, after all.”

“He is a very grasping man, though.”

“Very.”

“What does he want you to do?”

“Collect all that my patients owe me.”

“A very sensible thing,” remarked my Aunt Stilling.

“Well, there are the Shepards—”

“Oh, the Shepards are poor—they can’t pay.”

“I might take the cow.”

“The cow! the cow! How came such a villanous idea as that to enter your head, Walter Stilling?”

“Squire Boulter put it there.”

“Oh! ah—yes, I dare say; that is the way his wife flourishes in so much finery, by distressing the poor. Thank Heaven, somebody that I could name, has n’t her conscience to keep her awake o’ nights.”

“Then I hope somebody that I could name, finds a comfortable woollen shawl a very comely thing, dear Maggy.”

“There are more people than the Shepards who owe you,” said my Aunt Stilling, emphatically.

“Yes, little Amelia Strong.”

“Pooh, Doctor! you are only making fun now. Squire Boulter himself would n’t be mean enough to take a friendless school-mistress’ wages away from her, because, poor thing, she chanced to fall sick.”

“She managed to swallow an immense quantity of my costliest kind of medicine.”

“Pooh!”

“And we had to get an extra help on her account.”

“Oh, Betsey Loud needed the wages, and I was glad to find work for her.”

“Then you fell sick watching over her, and had that long severe fever.”

“I might have had it any way. But I hope you don’t expect, Doctor, that poor Amelia Strong’s money can pay for my sickness.”

"Well, then, there are the Lambs."

"Oh, darling little Effie died; all your medicine could n't save her, and they are broken-hearted about it."

"They are well able to pay."

"Yes, but somehow folks never think of paying you. I do wonder some at the Lambs, though. I should suppose they would say something about it — you were with them so night and day."

"I might send in my bill."

"I would n't do it, Doctor; no, no, better lose it a dozen times over. The poor child is dead, and never will cost money or trouble more. Let the Lambs pay, if they choose; but I never would ask them — never."

"Well, there are the Derbyshires."

"Ah, they have a hard enough task to get along, without our making it worse."

"And the Jilsons."

"A family of poor helpless women, all the time sick. We should be kind to the 'widows and fatherless,' Walter."

"Then there are the Millers; I have heavy demands on them. I bought a couple of notes, to prevent some hard-hearted people from distressing them, when they were all down with the epidemic; and these, with my own bills, aided by a little politic manœuvring, give me such an advantage, that I might possess myself of a deed of their little farm, without difficulty."

"Ah, but you never had a thought of doing it, I am sure, Walter; and Kitty in a consumption, and Allan such a cripple? No, no; you never would touch the farm of the Millers, not you."

"Squire Boulter thinks I am a fool for not doing it."

"Squire Boulter is a scoundrel, then."

"Who uses hard names now, Maggy?"

"He is a scoundrel; and his ill-gotten wealth will come to no good, I am sure. I would walk the streets barefoot, before I would flaunt out as Mrs. Boulter does."

"And your bare feet would look quite as well as her

French kid slippers on this muddy morning," said my Uncle Stilling, throwing a glance through the window, as the veritable lady was passing.

"Ah, yes! there she goes! See how she minces and —"

"Ah, Maggy, Maggy! think of that matter of a conscience thou hast mentioned. And after thou hast proved thyself the happier woman of the two, think how wicked it is to rail against the unfortunate."

"But her airs *are* provoking—as though her finery and grand house should set her up above her neighbors!"

"Do her airs make her more agreeable to her friends?"

"Oh, no!"

"To anybody?"

"No, indeed!"

"Then thou shouldst pity her, my good Maggy; for she labors very hard for nought."

"She has more enemies than any woman I know."

"Ah, then she is doubly unfortunate—enemies without and enemies within. Poor Mistress Boulter!"

"You would wish her great fiery eye anywhere but on you, if she should hear you say, 'Poor Mrs. Boulter!' It would be full enough of wrath to burn your eyelashes."

"Then she shall not hear me say it; but I will pity her, notwithstanding. Go we back to my bills, Maggy. What say you to the Remmingtons?"

"Pshaw! you are fooling, Doctor."

"And the Bells?"

"Our own cousins."

"Second cousins."

"Well, we will go to them when we have cooked our last potato."

"Bravo, Meg! you are almost a philosopher. I like to hear you talk so bravely of the last potato. But here is one more family on my list—the Wilsons."

"Throw your old account-book into the fire, Doctor. I verily believe there is not a family in all Cedarville so able to pay as we are to lose it."

"Right, right, my girl! and not a family in all the state, in the whole country, happier than we in our plain, homely independence. Why, we always have enough; our house is better than a palace, since our doors are strong enough to shut contentment in; and then our brave beautiful boys—who so rich as we, Maggy?"

The sparkling eyes of my Aunt Stilling became strangely soft and dewy; and there was a grateful expression on her placid face, which convinced her husband that the demon of envy was expelled, at least for a season.

I think a jury of twelve honest, world-wise men, selected from any rank or class in the land, would have coincided with the opinion of Squire Boulter, that my Uncle Stilling was a great spendthrift of that inner wealth called talent. He was a wise man, and ingenious in many things, and deeply versed both in books and men; yet he never had made himself rich in this world's goods, and had now no higher honors than the hearts of all the people about Cedarville. My Uncle Stilling loved well enough the pleasant things that brighten men's pathways; but he loved honor and truth and kindness and goodness better. His heart warmed toward every human being; every man was his brother. The poor, a young brother whom he was bound to watch over, soothe, aid and protect. But my Uncle Stilling did not confine his kindness to any single class. The poor and unfortunate were more peculiarly his friends—these called forth all the deep-seated tenderness of his nature; but the rich, too, the gay and glad-some, had their share of the gentle, fresh-hearted old man's sympathy. The young were his companions; and not a child in all the country round but sprang to his arms as to those of a beloved parent.

My Uncle Stilling was not indolent, and yet he was usually considered a great time-waster. No matter how urgent his business or how great a matter was at stake if it concerned himself only, the sick claimed always his most assiduous attention. If his hand could best administer the cool-

ing draught, this was the nearest, the immediate duty ; if his kind voice had a soothing or cheering power, it belonged to his patients as much as his medicine did ; and the opposite scale, with the loss or gain of a few dollars thrown into it, kicked the beam. It would have done so with the estate of a millionaire. In truth, though all loved the good Doctor, and were scarce willing to believe he had a fault, there were many who used to say with Squire Boulter, that it was a great pity he should know so little of the worth of money. Sometimes my aunt thought it a pity, too ; for, though she shared deeply in his kindness of heart, she had but a small portion of his philosophical indifference to the fruits of an indulgence in it. The fine dress and fine furniture of her neighbors dazzled her benevolent eyes ; and she could scarce see why she must deny herself of luxuries which, according to universal consent, were within her reach. So my aunt would think the matter over, (a very dangerous practice, by the way, when the thinking is all on one side of the question,) and, as she thought, grow dignified, then stern, then awfully severe ; and, fully clad in such dark mental clouds, step into the presence of her good easy spouse to pour the concentrated storm on his devoted head. But my aunt was really a charitable personage ; and, though she wanted to "have her pie and eat it" both at once, though she wanted to "buy the hobby-horse and keep the money," she was always duly horrified at the idea of indulging her vanity at the expense of her benevolence. And very well did my Uncle Stilling know the love-moulded key which unlocked her sympathetic heart. When she began with a biting word, (known to be caustic only by the emphatically dignified "*Walter Stilling*,") she usually ended with a tear of sympathy for some sufferer, or a glow of gratitude on account of her own blessings.

My uncle had yet other ways of wasting his time than over his patients. He was a great naturalist ; not a shell or pebble escaped his notice ; not a plant could spring up in the field but my Uncle Stilling's eye watched it with a parental interest. The different bird-notes which made the woodland glad

were all as familiar to him as the voices of his children ; he knew the little green blade which peeped earliest from the mould in the spring time, and the leaves which latest yielded to the kiss of the ice-lipped frost-spirit ; and he knew the pattern and material of every little nest which was hidden away beneath the summer foliage. Whole days would he spend (waste, his neighbors said) wandering over field or woodland ; returning at dew-fall with a fresh outlay of dew upon his own heart, and calling his little family about him to rejoice over the prize he had discovered. And *such* a prize ! A handful of weeds — a pocket-handkerchief of mosses — half-a-dozen petrifications — a forsaken bird's nest — all these were precious things in the eyes of my Uncle Stilling. Roger Acton's wondrous pot of money, even when the eager eyes of the half-crazed expectant first lighted on it, was incapable of producing such a joyous heart-bound as the discovery of a new floral treasure communicated to my good uncle. It was an electricity passing up through the mysteriously linked chain of God's works, from the beautiful in matter to the beautiful in spirit. My uncle's nature was like the woodland flower, with the dew and perfume as fresh upon it as when its unfolding petals first looked out upon the sunlight. And when the pure blooming counterpart was found, his feet moved almost as blithely as those of wild Harry himself ; and Harry, and little Will, and pretty Susy, soon caught the infection ; knowing first by my uncle's eyes, and afterwards by putting his own estimate on his treasures, when to be glad. As for my Aunt Stilling, she could not exactly see the use of bringing all these things in to litter up the house, but she did not really like to say as much ; for, kind, gentle soul that she was, it did her heart good to see her husband and children happy. Not that it was a rare sight by any means ; but my Aunt Stilling knew, by peeping into other houses what a comfortless guest she might introduce at her fire-side.

Still another way of wasting time had my Uncle Stilling. He knew very well that he was neither poet nor painter ; but there was scarce a pretty eye in the country round that he

had not written verses to, and scarce a house but could shew some specimen of his handiwork with the pencil. His verses praised the bright eye and the handsome lip right gallantly; but they always reminded the fair possessor of those charms of more enduring and still lovelier beauties. His verses were pure and vigorous, rich with good sense, though sometimes rather deficient in poetic fancies; and each bore to the particular individual which had called out the effusion an especial and pointed heart-lesson. Had any of his young friends been guilty of a wrong, my Uncle Stilling administered his gentle reproof in rhyme; and thus gilded over, the bitter pill, which might otherwise have been cast away, became quite palatable. His paintings were usually holyday presents. When Christmas came he was the Santa Claus of at least five square miles; and on New Year's day his capacious and well crammed saddle-bags were quite innocent of physic. Moreover, he knew the precise age of every young person in the neighborhood; and he never neglected to honor in his simple way the anniversary of a birth-day. His pictures were like his verses—illustrations of some every-day truth which young people are apt to forget; and always carefully adapted to the taste and character of those to whom they were presented. My uncle knew that there was now and then a person of his parish (Parson Adams was not half as much the shepherd of his flock as was the pious, simple-souled Doctor) who did not set a very high value on either his verses or his pictures, and for these he had other and more acceptable gifts. Bouquets of flowers, with a slip of paper around each, telling the language; books carefully marked by his pencil; and, on great occasions, glass cases of birds, stuffed and arranged by his own fingers. There is even now a singularly pure moral atmosphere pervading Cedarville; and it is not difficult to believe that the heart-warm breath of my Uncle Stilling still animates the natures which were early moulded by his simple, plain, but high-minded precepts, aided by acts quite as guileless and unselfish. Blessings on the single-hearted and the good! A high intellect is a gift from God—a pure heart is his dwelling place.

Twenty years had passed, not without leaving some traces; for however noiseless the tread of the grey-beard, his footsteps are always discernible on our frail sands. He had, however, trodden very lightly over Cedarville, and had been particularly gentle with my Uncle Stilling. The old man still lived in his little white cottage with the green blinds and latticed portico; and his good dame, as good and benevolent and careful of his comfort as ever, was still by his side. The grape-vine porch was rather more luxuriantly covered with the dark, rich foliage, but otherwise it looked the same as twenty years before. The white rose-bushes climbed to the eaves as they had done in former times; the lilacs bordered the path from the gate to the door-way; and the holly-hocks and purple mallows bloomed in neat rows along the garden patch. The squash-vines still crept about among the hills of sweet corn; the peas and beans budded and blossomed and yielded up their produce down by the meadow fence; the melon-patch had not moved an inch from its old place in the corner; and the long, narrow beds of beets, carrots, parsnips and onions, still exhibited their even, carefully weeded rows, in the foreground. Directly beneath my Aunt Stilling's window were the self-same treasures that had occupied that distinguished position twenty years previous—the sage, thyme, rue, camomile, worm-wood, celery, caraway, and various other trifles, cultivated by her own hand. The currant-bushes, too, were the same; and if those two cherry-trees adorning the grass-plot, where my aunt still spread her linen to bleach, were not the identical ones to which wild Harry owed so many tumbles in his babyhood, they were strangely like them. But wild Harry was now a man, with a frolicsome counterpart of himself to tumble from cherry-trees and keep grand-mama tremulous with alarms, which had gathered peculiar strength with the dignity of a new title. My Uncle Stilling was no richer than ever; but he was just as comfortable, and just as contented, and just as happy. His wishes with regard to his children were all gratified, and particularly so in the case of his darling Willy; who, according to universal con-

sent, was a "bright and shining light" in Cedarville. The young clergyman had taken the place of Parson Adams, on his demise; and his flock lost nothing by having the virtues of my Uncle Stilling — gentleness, simplicity, contentment, benevolence, trust and love — engrafted on the piety which looks to be of doubtful origin when these are kept in the background. If pride be a sin, then was my Uncle Stilling more sinful with his white hairs on than he had been in all his life before. He was proud, indeed, of his noble, high-minded, half-sainted boy. Did any one speak kindly of him — and that was an every-day thing — the old man's still sunny eyes began to draw up moisture from the heart; and words of warm praise were always rewarded by a gush of grateful tears. Every Sabbath, when he walked down the church aisle and saw the faces of the congregation kindling with love as they gathered around the sacred desk to greet their young pastor, his heart and eyes overflowed together, and he was wont to say in the words of one as guileless and as enthusiastic as himself, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." My Uncle Stilling was proud of his eldest son, too; but it was a different kind of pride. Harry had gone abroad from him and had made separate interests, (although the love-link between them was still stronger than in most hearts,) and won much applause among men. The old man was not indifferent to these honors, for he knew that they were the reward of his son's virtues; but he valued the virtues themselves much higher. The sight of Harry and his young wife and their beautiful children, (a snow-drop and an oak in miniature,) made my uncle's heart swell with proud softness; but it was on Willy that the more than womanly tenderness of his strangely gifted nature was lavished most unsparingly. Nor must sweet Susy be forgotten, for she was my Aunt Stilling's "staff and comfort." Susy could not, of course, be spared from the village, though the little white cottage was scarce grand enough for the wife of its greatest lawyer. So there was a handsome house built at the farther end of the garden; and when young Mrs. Eastman did not dine

with mamma Stilling, why, dear mamma must make one, and the good Doctor another, and darling brother Willy another, at the board of the lawyer's lady. Few men are so blessed in age as my Uncle Stilling, for very few have so spent their prime. He was now reaping the harvest that he had sown in other days, and it was truly a golden one to his heart.

Directly opposite the little white cottage was a large, showy mansion, erected by Squire Boulter when his coffers were fullest. The fine garden was now all overrun with weeds, and the pleasant summer-house had quite gone to decay. Only a few flowers of the most enduring kind remained, and they were fast yielding to the rank weeds. The choice fruit trees stood dead and blackened, their leafless limbs all covered with mould; and the shrubbery was broken down and neglected. A pitiful sight was that once handsome garden, and no less pitiful the neglected house. The wide gravel-walk leading to it had grown into a narrow foot-path; the shade-trees were unpruned, and long dead vines clung to their trunks and swung to and fro in the air; the marble door-stone was broken and mossed over on the outer edges; and the shutters above hung in shattered remnants, some on a single hinge. Here, all alone, dwelt Squire Boulter. His wife had long since gone to her final rest; and his son, whose future welfare had been the one engrossing thought of other days, had strangely repaid his care. Edmund Boulter had been the playmate of Harry Stilling, and was then esteemed a bright, active lad, who would, in all probability, take some decided part in the world, either for good or evil. Every indulgence of a certain character had been shown him in his childhood, but it was not the kind of indulgence which leaves a soft impress. Squire Boulter had believed that nothing could be done without money; and his son adopted a still more dangerous faith — no pleasure was worth enjoying that money did not purchase. The effect of this belief need not now be traced out; it requires but a look to the right or left to see it all; for Edmund Boulter's was no untrodden path.

He was an only child ; and, of course, knew before he had counted a dozen summers, that he was heir to wealth considered in Cedarville immeasurable. And so, slowly and by degrees, as the years went by, came the old story of ruined intellect and ruined heart — a godlike image desecrated. By the time Edmund Boulter was a man, more tears had been shed over him than ever wetted the pillow of the dead ; and he had become to the Squire a constant living heart-ache. And now the old man endeavored to teach, by severity, lessons which should have been melted into the pliant heart before selfishness had spread above it the impenetrable crust that now shut it firmly in. Alternate sternness and lavish indulgence only increased the evil ; and finally, the unhappy father resolved to try a desperate experiment, and shake off his son entirely for the present.

“ You are a strong, able-bodied man,” said Squire Boulter, “ and you have a good profession ; this,” putting a paper into his hand, “ is all I shall give you. You are henceforth to depend entirely on your own resources.”

Edmund did not for a moment believe his father in earnest, so he accepted the check, laughingly, and launched out into new extravagances. But he soon learned his mistake. Then he pleaded and threatened by turns ; but the old man was inexorable.

“ After all that I have done for you !” he would say, bitterly. “ If I had been the careless father that Doctor Stilling has, it might better be borne ; but now — out of my presence, ingrate !”

Edmund Boulter went away, and for years was not heard of, except perhaps by his father. What his life was during this time may be guessed ; for the old man’s eye grew every day heavier, and the furrows in his cheek deeper ; but he did not relent.

Early one bright morning, just as the first heaven-messengers were giving their color to the gems which clustered about every leaf and grass-blade, my Uncle Stilling sat by the win-

dow, carefully conning a book which had been brought home the evening before by his darling Willy. As he raised his eyes from the page, they fell upon something without, which at once riveted his attention. He looked earnestly for a while; pulled off his spectacles, and then looked again; took another pair from his pocket, carefully wiped the glasses; adjusted them as carefully, and then leaned out of the window with unusual interest. Suddenly his head was drawn back.

"Maggy! Maggy!" My uncle's cheek was pale, and his voice husky. "Maggy!—quick!—here!"

My aunt came—an old, old woman, quite gray, a wrinkle on her forehead, the most placid of smiles on her lip, her form slightly bended, but with the step of a girl.

"What is that, Maggy?"

"Where?"

"There, in—in—"

"I don't see."

"Bless your heart! in the Squire's yard, on—on the big horse-chestnut."

My aunt looked a moment, and a strange, alarmed expression came over her face.

"What is it, Maggy?"

"I—I don't—know, Walter."

The words were gasped out rather than spoken.

"Do you think—there, don't be frightened—don't be frightened, child—perhaps—perhaps it's nothing. I'll just step over—"

"No, no, Walter! you're an old man—let Willy go—such sights—"

My aunt was interrupted by a violent ringing at the door, and a cry of alarm from the street.

No, no! Such sights were not befitting eyes like thine, my dear, old, gentle-hearted uncle! Suspended by the neck from the horse-chestnut, dead, quite dead, hung the daring, dissolute Edmund Boulter; and prostrate beside his own door-stone, his white hairs flecked with the blood which was

oozing from his lips and nostrils, lay the inanimate form of the stricken father.

"He has murdered the old man, and then hung himself," was the first exclamation.

But this was a hasty judgment. Edmund Boulter was not guilty of parricide by violent means, whatever a nicer judge might decide with regard to invisible weapons.

A wondering, awe-stricken multitude followed the suicide to his grave; while my good Uncle Stilling strove to quiet the ravings of the miserable parent. The son had returned to the village the evening before, and endeavored to gain admittance at the door of his father; but he was peremptorily refused.

"I will haunt you forever, for this!" were the last words that Squire Boulter heard, accompanied by an oath which made him shudder. They had troubled his dreams in the night-time, and once he thought he heard them again. He listened. There was a noise as of strangulation, accompanied by a wild, horrid laugh, that was yet more a yell of anguish. He threw up the sash, and for a moment thought there was an unusual commotion among the leaves of the horse-chestnut. Then all was still. The moon looked down peacefully, the stars shone out in sweetness, and not a footstep or a feathered thing was astir. Squire Boulter went back again to his pillow, but his stern resolution began to melt. In the morning he rose early, and went out to seek his son, resolving to try once more the effect of kindness. It was too late. The wretched man had seized recklessly upon Eternity, and Time had receded from him.

"It is of no use — no use, Doctor," said Squire Boulter, in one of his lucid moments, "my son is carried to a dishonored grave, while yours stands up in the desk and points the moral. Is that the Almighty's justice?"

"God has a clearer eye than we have," was the soft response of my uncle.

"If I had been as neglectful as you, Doctor — if I had been

such a father as you have—but I would have bartered my soul to Satan, for that boy's good."

"Better have bent the knee to God, my poor neighbor," murmured my Uncle Stilling, softly.

There was a reproach in the words, but not in the tone or manner; for my uncle's sympathetic nature was all melted into tears. He was not the avenging angel to wound even by truth an already bruised and bleeding heart. Squire Boulter had walked blindfold all his life; and the light now would have been a "consuming fire to him." My Uncle Stilling had endeavored to remove the bandage when all were happy; but now his whole study was to ease the rack-ing pain of a woe-laden heart. And he partially succeeded—only partially. The wound was incurable, and the barbed arrow rankled and cankered in the old man's bosom, till another grave was opened, and the gentle young pastor prayed above it; and the sod lay upon the breast of Squire Boulter.

NICKIE BEN."

WE were at Alderbrook — three of them, indeed — but only one has worth talking about, one who has been talked about — one who has been blown upon, if not by "the breath of fame," by that gossiping approach to it which is fame's stage-coach — one, in short, who deserves a historian. Now, do not "think you see him," dear reader, before I begin; and so place before your mind's eye a little, spare, cunning, smooth-tongued fox of an attorney, whom it will be my bounden duty to demolish.

"A face like a wedge, made to force its way through the world, eyes like black beans a-boiling in milk, and a step like a cat's —"

Not a bit of it. Oh, no! you do *not* see *our* lawyer.

Benjamin Nichols, or "Nickie Ben," as he has been irreverently re-christened by some wag, with the consent, of everybody, has a voice — oh, *such* a voice! the north wind is an infant's whisper to it — stands very nearly six feet in his stockings, and is of dimensions never scoffed at. In good sooth, that brawny arm might have wielded the genuine old Scottish claymore by the side of Robert Bruce, and other worthies of the times that were, and never have been ashamed of the muscles in it. Nickie Ben, however, was reserved for more elegant diversions than hewing off men's heads, and slicing down their shoulders; and he rewarded fate for her flattering favors to himself by entering with great zest into the spirit which governs the modern world. In place of such boisterous cries as "A Bruce! A Bruce!" "A Richard! A Richard!" or "Beau-seant!" he slipped his fingers quietly to the bottom of his eel-skin purse, laid his thumb against the pillars, and his forefinger against the kingly head upon the

sixpences there; while his eye twinkled, and his features worked in a way fully to prove his loyalty to that little piece of coin, and his determination to die, if need be, in the service of *the family*.

Nickie Ben's boyhood was none of the easiest. He never laid his head on a pillow of down, poor boy! nor had a softer covering than a heavy patch-work quilt, stuffed with cotton; indeed, it used to be shrewdly suspected by some inquisitive neighbors, that even the quilt was sometimes lacking, and that young Nickie might have rolled up his day-wearables to rest his head upon. However that might be, the Widow Nichols managed to keep up appearances to the level of humble respectability; and, though she and her daughter Betsy and her son Ben might all have breakfasted on a smaller allowance than would have served Squire Risdell for lunch, not an intimation to that effect ever crossed the lips of one of the family. Nothing about them bespoke the meagre fare, except the meagre frame; the preponderance of bone and sinew over flesh and quick blood. If you would see the really *suffering* poor, do not go to the wretched hovel where famine dwells confessedly, and poverty draws the outlines of its own gaunt figure on lintel and casement; but turn to those who are ashamed to say they *want*; whose brows knit while their lips smile; who, wearing the pinched look, find their cares increased by laboring always for its concealment. There is poverty unmitigated — unmitigated by the hope of human sympathy; a thing, however, which galls oftener than it soothes.

I do not know that the Widow Nichols belonged entirely to the above mentioned class — indeed, I rather think that if she did, she maintained the character on a particularly small scale; she was seldom pinched in her allowance of eatables more than enough to give her a good appetite, and never laid claim to anything higher than respectable, industrious independence. The good widow was a genuine *worker*; and, as industrious, clever women usually have some little foible, she could not be expected to be exempt. It was, accordingly,

reported at Alderbrook, that, during the lifetime of the elder Benny, (who, by the way, was a remarkably "shiftless man") this "crown to her husband" was, to all intents and purposes, the head of the family; and, in her love of rule, not unfrequently drove from the door with such weapons as the broom and poker, the *head* which she should have graced. But old Benny was "gathered to his fathers," and the sceptre remained undisputed in the hands of the widow. And now, indeed, she wielded it to good purpose.

Betsy was older than young Ben, old enough, indeed, to "do a deal of work;" and it was soon decided in the mind of the widow that the daughter should sacrifice herself to the son's advancement. To be sure, Betsy was a girl after the mother's own heart, industrious and pains-taking; and Ben was rather inclined to saunter in his father's footsteps; but the widow was of the opinion that the bent twig might be braced and straightened; and, after all, it must be owned that a son may be "the making of a family," while the daughter only holds the candle to him. Ben's education was the thing to be accomplished; and Betsy and Betsy's mother heeded neither aching eyes nor aching fingers while earning, stitch by stitch, the scanty pittance which was to make the son and brother great. Ben was indolent, but he was grateful-*ish*; and when he thought of the two busy needles, the scanty board and hard bed at Alderbrook, he would have had more than human selfishness to neglect his studies and waste his time. Ben did not, however, believe that gratitude precluded yawning, and as the difference between *skimming over* a book and *diving into* it had never been made quite clear to his perceptions, he may be forgiven for preferring the first method, which, I have been told, is much in vogue now, since accomplished scholars are no longer the fashion. Ben *skimmed* successfully at college; and brought away a degree and the pre-nomen of Nickie. By this time there was one needle less at Alberbrook. Poor Betsy had finished her work, worn herself out with labor; and the widow was alone.

It is doubtful whether Nickie Ben would have made much

use of his lore but for the pushing that was still kept up by the widow; but with her own single hand she put him in the way of a profession, and pushed him through into the very bar. I say *she* did it, and I say correctly; for, although Nickie Ben was beginning to imitate her shrewdness and energy, he never would have performed the feat of his own accord. Of Nickie Ben's legal knowledge I say nothing; for what can women know of such things? but I have heard that he was not very long in obtaining practice. He had a peculiar gift at pettifogging, (a very essential qualification in such out-o'-the-way places as Alderbrook,) and great professional *acumen*, for he snuffed *a case* in every fresh breeze that visited him; and kindly pointed out to his neighbors insults and abuses which they would never have seen but by the help of his superior discernment. No quarrel was so small but he found room to thrust in a finger; no matter so contemptible but the salt of the law, applied by Nickie Ben, preserved and dignified it into something, to stay on men's memories; and no coin was so trifling but our lawyer esteemed it worth a full hour's bickering. His pillow was now as hard, and his dinner as light as in boyhood; but it was no longer from necessity. Ben was economical. Some said he was mean, penurious; men spoke of him with a curling lip, and not a single woman knew him. But what was all this to Nickie Ben? He was effectually aroused from his boyish indolence, and he was determined to be rich — *rich* — RICH! The word had been dinned in his ear by his mother until he knew all the changes that could possibly be rung upon it; and no slavery was too abject to be made a stepping-stone to the golden throne which he saw in the far-off future. Not that Ben Nichols "sold his soul to Mammon;" he sacrificed his manliness and independence to — *public opinion*. You do not see how it is, dear reader. I will show you.

Years went by, and our lawyer became "*Auld* Nickie Ben;" though his head had a less weight of time upon it than his appearance indicated. But he was as plodding, as careful, as penurious as ever. Everybody said that he was a

confirmed bachelor; and everybody sneered at him as a detestable miser. Yet do not think for a moment that Nickie was a thin, cadaverous man, with a face the color of his gold, and shoulders graced with a consumptive curve—he was anything but that. I think, however, I have before mentioned his physical capabilities.

Every morning before the sun was up, in summer and winter, rain and sunshine, our lawyer might have been seen, by any early riser, out taking his habitual exercise. He always walked up a green lane, about a mile west of the village, whence he proceeded along the border of the woods, over the top of Strawberry Hill, and down into the ravine beyond, until he reached the toll-gate at the foot of the hill on the east. The remainder of his walk was on the side of the road back to Alderbrook. By this means Nickie Ben made himself visible in the course of the morning to all the villagers who chose to look at him; and many were the impertinent little misses whose giddy eyes took the measure of his short-waisted coat, and feasted their love of fun on his heavy boots, with their clumsy shape, and the iron nails in their heels, and mimicked his gait, and talked mockingly of the piles of pennies in his coffers. Everybody despised Ben Nichols; and yet he had never, like many an *honorable man*, defrauded the widow of her dues, or been a canker on the orphan's birth-right; he had never taken a penny that was not justly his own; but he had never given away, or wasted or bartered without due consideration, even the hundredth part of the smallest coin current.

The little brown cottage occupied by the widow and her son was never visited by the villagers; for the old lady had no interests in common with them; her "boy" was the centre of all her thoughts, wishes and affections, and his doings their circumference. But she did not dote as other mothers do. She did not offer his head a resting place when he came home wearied, and endeavor, by presenting pleasant subjects, to divert his mind from the toils and cares of the day; but she inquired after his clients, what business had come to him since

the morning, how the matters of yesterday were adjusted, and how much money they had brought him. Sometimes a vague suspicion entered the mind of poor Nickie Ben that he was not living to the best purpose ; that there was something other men enjoyed which he did not ; sometimes he even *felt* the dog-like treatment which he received at the hands of his fellows ; but then, with a hard drawn breath, he would repeat to himself, "hereafter — hereafter !" and go on his way perseveringly. Thus, year in, year out, Benjamin Nichols breathed his proportion of air, and filled his proportion of space, until he reached "life's meridian height," and travelled the distance of five years on the downward slope ; and then, all of a sudden, "a change came o'er the spirit of his" selfishness. The widow was alarmed, and interposed her maternal authority — then reasoning — then entreaty ; but it was useless. The sceptre had passed from her hand — her reign was at an end.

One day the village was thrown into great amazement by the report that Mrs. Nichols and her son had taken seats in the eastern stage-coach ; for the old lady had not been out of Alderbrook within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, and the lawyer never moved but at a business call. The matter was a nine days' wonder, and scarcely grew stale afterward. Two, three, and four weeks passed, and, finally, late of a Saturday night, the stage brought back the unusual travellers. The news soon spread through the village, coupled with rumors of a wondrous metamorphose. Indeed, it was reported that the widow and her son could scarcely be recognized by those who had been accustomed to seeing them every day.

All Sunday morning, not an eye in church but was prone to wander to the pew where sat the Nicholsons — they could not help it ; who could blame them ? The enormous bonnet, of a rusty black, that the old lady had worn ever since the day of her daughter's funeral ; the scant, old-fashioned gown, with its gored skirt, waist of a finger's length, and sleeves nearly meeting in the back ; and the thin shawl, embroidered all over with darns, and always bearing the print of the

smoothing-iron, were displaced by articles richer than any shopkeeper in Alderbrook would venture to purchase. Everybody was amazed; almost everybody felt inclined to smile; a great many touched their neighbors on the arm, and indicated by some slight gesture the direction that the eye should take; and a few of the least reverent in the congregation whispered, "Bless me! how young the Widow Nichols looks!" And they had reason, for the old lady seemed to have taken a new lease of life. Brussels laces and fashionable bonnets *will* meddle with Time's pencil, though they cannot stay his scythe. But the widow attracted a very small share of attention in comparison with her son. Everything about him was new. The cut of his coat had changed his figure completely, and the inward hilarity consequent upon emancipation from the slavery of penny counting, had changed his face so that he was really handsome. But there was another thing which aided the transformation of the face not a little. The short, coarse hair, standing out from his head like the quills of a porcupine, had been turned by some magic into luxuriant curls, smooth and glossy and black as the wing of a raven, straying back from his forehead as though too much at home there to think of a better resting place. Those beautiful curls! Why, there was not a young beau in the village who would have ventured to show his head beside them. And, really, Nickie Ben was a fine-looking man—quite the gentleman—with nothing exceptionable about him, from kid gloves to French boots—even the tie of his cravat was *comme il faut*. We watched him—Ada Palmer and I—after the services were over, as he tucked his mother under his arm, *not* very gently, and strode, with even more than his usual swing, down the street.

"He has not been to a walking school," whispered Ada.

The gait was pretty much all that was left to prove Nickie Ben's identity.

"They stop at the 'Sheaf and Sickle,'" continued Ada, still looking after them. "It would be wonderful if they have gone into the extravagance of taking rooms there."

Wonderful, indeed, but it was none the less true. The little brown house was quite too small for the metamorphosed lawyer; and though the old lady groaned a little, and talked of ruin, she submitted with a much better grace than could have been expected. And now it somehow happened that two or three neighbors looked in upon her; and, though the widow talked a great deal of her son, and seemed to forget that there was anybody else worth caring for in the world, they bore with the foible very patiently. As for the son himself, he began to evince a strong tendency to socialness, and even managed to obtain an introduction to several ladies of the village, persons who had grown up around him entirely unobserved before.

One bright morning Ada Palmer and I were out with our baskets, despite the little night jewellers that had left a string of diamonds on every grass blade; and it chanced to be precisely the hour that the lawyer was in the habit of crossing Strawberry Hill. I will not assert that we were ignorant of this peculiar habit of his, nor that our glances were *all* directed to the knoll spotted over with crimson, while he passed along the edge of the woods; these are irrelevant matters. But it chanced that the bachelor lawyer, after walking over the top of the fence like an emperor, came, with his swinging arms and swinging person, and long, hasty strides, to the very part of the hill where we were demurely engaged in picking berries, like two sensible, industrious girls, and—Did you ever see a glowing sunlight bursting from the edges of a black storm cloud? Then you may have some faint notion of the magical effect of a smile on such a face as Nickie Ben's. Who could resist it? Not Ada Palmer or her friend Fanny. I much doubt if the lawyer had ever been smiled upon before, or had ever heard a voice softer than his mother's, for his face was full of a pleased, bashful wonder. We had supposed, when placing ourselves in Nickie Ben's path, that if his new humor should lead him to look at us, he would consider us little children, with whom he might frolic if he chose, and for a frolic we were fully prepared. But not so—what had he to do

with children's play?—that is, real, genuine care-for-nought play. Life had been a sober, earnest term to him thus far; and now he was as sober and earnest in looking for pleasure as he ever had been in looking for money. Now he was a *rich man*, he could *pay* for his enjoyments; and should he stoop to pick up those which the beggar might possess? Of course all these thoughts did not pass through the lawyer's mind while crossing Strawberry Hill. They did not *pass through*, because they remained there all the time; they had resolved themselves into ever-present *feelings*; and he had no disposition to be anything but *in earnest*. We did not altogether understand this, however; and when the lawyer doffed his hat, and smiled, and in his best tones bade us a good-morning, though we smiled in return, and bowed, and said "good morning," too, the embarrassment was all on our side.

"How stupid!" exclaimed Ada, as soon as he was out of hearing.

"Who? we or Nickie Ben?"

"Both, I think. Here we have lost a morning nap, got our dresses dragged with dew, and turned the laugh of everybody against us, (for nobody will ever believe we came for strawberries,) just for the sake of hearing a stupid old Jew of a fellow, who ought to have had that new wig of his when we were in our cradles, remind us that we are *young ladies*. Come, Fan, we may as well go home and take a dish of coffee upon it."

"With a dozen berries each?"

"We will hide the baskets in the grass, and say we came out for the benefit of the dew to brighten our complexions. But I will never laugh again about Nickie Ben, not even his walk and his bow. *We* are the simpletons."

Ada and I did not go to Strawberry Hill again in the morning; and in a few days, I began to observe that her belle-ship took a deal of extra pains to avoid, without downright incivility, meeting the lawyer in the street. Next, it was rumored throughout the village that Nickie Ben had

called at Deacon Palmer's; next, that he was in the habit of calling frequently; and, finally, that he, as often as twice a week, spent an entire evening there. But I chanced to be in possession of a secret of which the villagers were ignorant. I suppose it is a well-known fact that country people cannot be "not at home," with impunity, like dwellers in the town; so Nickie Ben's tremendous knock was always a signal for Ada's slipping through the back door, and bounding across the clover-field to Underhill. It was a disagreeable state of things, very; and Ada declared that she would never return a bachelor's smile again, till she had first asked his *intentions*. But the lawyer was on the shady side of forty, and he had now no time to lose in chasing the butterfly caprices of a spoiled belle; so he decided on a single bold stroke.

The two evenings formerly spent with good Deacon Palmer (and very often whole days and nights) were now devoted to the study of architecture; and he could talk of nothing (Nickie Ben had really become a conversationist) but Grecian cottages, beautiful country residences, and such like subjects to make rustics stare, from morning to dew-fall. And Nickie Ben was not one to talk in vain. A fine meadow on the west of Alderbrook, without a stone upon it, and so smooth and even that a Yankee would have invented a machine for mowing it at a single slice without grazing earth, was finally selected and purchased of its owner. And now came parties of workmen and loads of lumber, and the beautiful meadow was turned into a scene of wild confusion. But it was a confusion that had the elements of order in it; for soon there arose in the centre of the green a most graceful structure, which hands a plenty were employed in adorning. No fault could be found with it; it was simple and convenient and exquisitely beautiful; and well it might be, for Nickie Ben's purse had *paid* for the taste which planned, as well as the labor which reared it. And the lawyer rubbed his hands right gleefully when people praised his cottage, and blessed—*himself* that he was rich. The cottage was finally finished, and then more than one head was employed in furnishing it. Marble, and rose-

wood, and mahogany, and Brussels, and Turkey, and crimson damask, and chandeliers, and other words belonging to the vocabulary of luxury, were now very common on the lips of Nickie Ben; and, after talking for a proper time, he set out, with a *paid friend* at his elbow, for New York. By this time gossiping neighbors began to measure, mentally and with their tongues, the depth of his purse, venturing surmises concerning its exhaustion; but they had forgotten the quiet little streams which keep the ocean full, and the lawyer had good reason to smile at their surmises. Nickie Ben's next extravagance was a carriage—a "splendid affair"—with all the belongings necessary and unnecessary, by no means omitting the "gentleman" to hold the ribbons. This last was a master stroke of policy; and, by the way, O ye half-despairing, half-hoping lovers, take the advice of one who has a right to know the heel of Achilles in a woman's heart, and, when everything else fails, *set up a carriage*. It was really provoking to see the lawyer whirl through the streets, his fine blood-horses prancing, his harness glittering, and his carriage sweeping the air with such conscious, indisputable superiority, with nobody younger and fairer than the widow by his side; it was tantalizing, and many a pretty belle was heard to acknowledge that if she were Ada Palmer it would be very tempting. To be sure the fine carriage in our muddy uneven streets looked a little like a Canary bird in a quagmire; but that was something that the elderly people could appreciate better than we; and the carriage gained the lawyer more respect from those whose respect he valued just now most, than even his rare cottage with its luxurious furniture.

Do you now see how Nickie Ben sacrificed his manliness and independence to *public opinion*?

And Ada?

Oh! Ada laughed, and jumped into her father's big hay wagon, and rode wherever she chose; and so the laugh of the whole village was on her side. Alas! poor Nickie Ben!—Alas!—no, I recall the sympathy. What has a man with plenty of money in his purse, and a head rife with plans for

enjoying it, to do with sighing? The rich lawyer was not discouraged; he was only disappointed; and his most painful feeling was regret for the loss of time. He immediately installed the widow mistress of the new cottage; procured an array of servants, probably in order to gratify her love of rule; and then, stepping into his carriage, he turned his horses' head eastward. In a few weeks he returned in high spirits; and, though he bowed to everybody, and smiled, and appeared more social than ever, nobody, not even Ada Palmer, crossed the street to avoid meeting him.

Spring came in trippingly, full of playful freaks and sweet caprices; and before many buds had opened, the lawyer's carriage had whirled him away from Alderbrook. We were on the *qui vive*. Who was to be mistress of the beautiful cottage? how looked she? was she old or young? pretty or plain? Of course she would be *purse proud*, for who would marry Nickie Ben but for his money?—and she would be vulgar and showy—and nobody would like her—that was certain. But the satisfactory certainty did not silence curiosity.

It was Sunday morning, and every lid was up in Alderbrook; for the lawyer had returned with his bride.

"Now for velvets, and ribbons, and laces," whispered Ada Palmer, though in a place where she should not have whispered, as she caught a glimpse of Nickie Ben's carriage from the window.

The next moment every eye in the church was turned to the door, and the lawyer opened it and entered. *That* his bride! or had the little white violet nestled in the moss by the brook-side, stolen a pulse from the grass, and a form from the guardians that bend over it in the night-time? Where had Nickie Ben found that pure, living dew-drop? and how came it in his possession? The sweet bride opened her innocent blue eyes as she entered; and then immediately the long lashes drooped over them, and rested meekly on the dainty pillow below, and, with a startled, timid look, she instinctively drew a little nearer her husband. It would have

required an Amazon to meet the stare of that surprised congregation. And she was a simple, lovely creature, just emerged from childhood; a yet unfolded bud, that the breeze had never kissed, nor the sun rifled of a single sweet. Had money bought this treasure? It was hard to think it, and yet—we did.

The next day the whole village called upon the gentle girl that our despised lawyer had given a home among us. It was late in the day when Ada Palmer and myself followed the fashion set us, and proceeded to the cottage. The bride was evidently wearied with the tedious ceremonies to which she had been subjected, and had flung herself on a sofa to rest. There was something like vexation, with a slight dash of merriment in it, on her countenance, when more visitors were announced; and we saw it in a moment, and saw, too, how infinitely amusing to one as young as ourselves, must have been the day's grave formalities. I do not think we smiled, at least more than was proper; we certainly spoke as the deacon himself might have spoken; but somehow, (and I shall always put implicit faith in Mesmerism therefor,) the lady became aware of the presence of sympathy and appreciation, and her pretty, childish face grew bright with its expression of frank pleasure. Not a word had been spoken but strictly ceremonial ones; not a tell-tale muscle moved; but there was a shining out of the heart upon the face, and we all comprehended the delicate pantomime. So we drew up our chairs, forming a close group, and—"where is ever the use" of confining the tongue after one has used a more expressive language?—we were friends and confidants past recall, and we were children enough to trust each other as wiser people never trust. We talked of Alderbrook, and the people in it, and made plans for the summer, and laughed and chattered on till the twilight grew very gray; and then we begged of our new acquaintance not to send for lights, and threatened to go away if she did, and spoke and acted in all respects like privileged friends. So she sat down by us again; and the pensiveness of the hour mellowed our gayety

into something no less happy, but a little holier. And then sweet Mrs. Nichols told us something of herself. She was an orphan, not yet out of mourning; and that was why she wore no bridal ornaments. She talked of her mother — how she had faded day by day; and how she had laid her thin hand lovingly upon the forehead of her only child, and talked to her of the dark, dark future, when there would be a coffin and a heap of earth between them two; and as she talked and wept, we wept, too, as though the loss had been our own. Then she told of a kind man who came to them, and how generously he acted, and how nobly promised; and how she had loved him from the first moment, though it was a long time before she dreamed of becoming his wife. And then she smiled, and blushed, and looked half-frightened, as though doubting if she had not said too much. But we told her we were glad that Mr. Nichols had been so kind; and that was touching the right chord. Oh! *so* kind! we could know nothing about it. Her poor mother had blessed him with her last breath, and had said that he was certainly sent of God. She did not know that the world contained such good people before; he had done everything for her; and now he had brought her to such a sweet home — it was fit for a princess. She could never thank him enough, and (blushing again) love him enough; all she could do would be to watch carefully that no trouble came to him which she could charm away, and to study his wishes always — but that would be no return; could we think of anything she could do more? There was a well-known step on the stair, and the face of the pretty young wife lighted up with animation; so we pressed her bright lips, like old friends, and promising to “come again to-morrow,” turned away.

It was very late that night before Ada and I parted; for the gentle, guileless stranger had grown quite to our hearts, and we talked over her prospects with doubt and trembling. But there was no need. Love had been dew and sunshine to the delicate plant; and now the very consciousness on the part of Benjamin Nichols that he could not understand nor fully

appreciate her, only made him worship her the more. He had sought her to please himself; he was interested by her gentle sweetness, and her gratitude touched a chord in his bosom that had never before been stirred; it reached below the encrusting selfishness of a life-time. He had never loved anything before, and now his love became idolatry. All this was so new and strange that he seemed to himself a fresh-hearted boy, just beginning the world; just learning the alphabet of life, such as God intended we should have it; and he turned to his unsuspecting teacher with new devotion every hour. Ah! what a feeling of self-respect came with the certainty that *she*, at least, preferred himself to his riches; that, were he a beggar, she would be the same; and how trivial appeared his possessions, in comparison with the pearl that he had at first sought only to adorn them.

The moral? Nay, reader mine, you had no promise of that. It is scarcely fair to attempt to turn a lady's boudoir into a laboratory. I have a little garden—a very little one; and I will gather you bouquets from it of such flowers as I can cultivate, begging you kindly to fling aside the weeds, and forgive the oversight of their admission. But I am only a florist, and have no skill in the arts of chemical analysis and combination. Accept, then, my simple offering of flowers, since these perishable things are all I have, and fling them into your own alembic. Though their life pass with my own summer, I would fain hope that some heart may thus extract a perfume that will lie upon it when the florist and her humble labors are alike forgotten.

WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

Oh, whither have they fled —
 Those spirits kind and warm,
 Which, numbered with the dead,
 Have nobly braved the storm ;
 And gained a port at last,
 A port of peace and rest,
 Where, earthly perils past,
 Their happy souls are blest ?

In some bright-beaming star,
 Do they weave the pencilled rays,
 Which, streaming from afar,
 Upon our vision blaze ?
 Or is the flickering light,
 Which the varying twilight brings,
 As it glimmers on our sight,
 But the waving of their wings ?

Perchance along the sky,
 The far-off azure dome,
 They wing them free and high,
 In their lofty spirit-home ;
 And the cooling zephyr's wing,
 As it fans the brow of care,
 In its voiceless whispering,
 May a message from them bear.

I have read a page that tells,
 Of a home *beyond* the sky ;
 Where the ransomed spirit dwells,
 With the God of love on high.

WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

There, their crowns of living light,
They cast down at his feet,
To seek this lower night,
And the child of sorrow greet.

Low, where dark shadows fall
On the heart and on the brain,
Where earthly pleasures pall,
And the bosom throbs with pain ;
There, with kindly lingering stay,
On their ministry of love,
They smooth the thorny way,
And point to rest above.

THE YOUNG DREAM.

HAVE you seen Miss Follansbe, the elegant Miss Catharine Follansbe, belle and beauty? You must have met her at some of the gay watering-places; for she has frequented the most fashionable during the season. A genuine star is she, not of the first magnitude, perhaps, though requiring but the reputation of being an heiress, and a little less personal dignity and haughty reserve, to rank above the most brilliant. She has shone at Washington, too, during two or three gay winters; and it has been whispered among the young lady's most intimate friends, that more than one coronet has been at her disposal, to say nothing of the honors of senators, and purses of millionaires. How that may be I know not, but I do know all about Miss Follansbe's first lover.

Ten years ago the radiant belle was only little Katy Follansbe, or "Lily Katy," as she was generally called—I suppose on account of the pure transparency of that white skin of hers, and the slender gracefulness of her fragile little figure, looking for all the world like a drooping osier branch, or that most spiritual of flowering things, the lily of the valley. You will not believe that the proud, queenly Miss Follansbe was ever such a pale, shy creature, all nature, all simplicity and untaught grace; and, indeed, there is but little, save that sweet, childish mouth, to prove Lily Katy and the self-possessed belle identical.

Ten years ago Squire Follansbe was not, as now, "one of the first families" in Peltonville, and Lily Katy bounded into her fourteenth summer singing cheerily, "My face is my fortune," and verily believing (if she thought anything about it) that no other fortune was necessary. Foolish Katy! Squire Follansbe had a growing family to care for, and no means of

procuring the wherewithal for their maintenance, but his own fruitful brain, seconded by a most economical and matter-of-fact helpmate. The squire was one of those all-enduring all-hoping beings, an office-seeker; and while golden visions of futurity were knotting up his brain into strange devices, it not unfrequently happened that his purse hugged its last sixpence, and the bare walls of his empty larder sent a chill to the heart of his good lady. There were bills, too. One bright spring morning Lily Katy crept away to her own room, with incomprehensible misgivings at seeing her school bill presented. Thither the mother soon followed, and a long, confidential communication ensued. Lily Katy had never felt so important in her life as on that morning, for she had been entrusted with mighty secrets; and, if she did not grow six inches taller, in those two hours, she was certainly a year older. It is strange how lightly men will throw that shadow called thoughtfulness on a young face, that, but for the spirit's joyance, would be a blank without; for it changes the whole current of life, and implants in the awakened heart the seed of all its misery, and its sweetest bliss. And a word, a glance, will sometimes touch the hidden spring, which, being once opened, will flow on forever. Lily Katy sprang from her couch that morning a child, a careless, buoyant, beautiful child; and she sat down at the dinner-table a woman; a very little woman, it is true, and so girlish in her pretty ways, that it would have required a close observer to note the change; but yet changed *forever*. Something, however, in her appearance seemed to attract the attention of the squire; for he paused several times in the discussion of his cutlet, to look at her strangely serious face; and at last inquired if his pretty darling was quite well. Little did he dream that the child had been diving her pretty head to the bottom of his affairs, deeper than he ever ventured to look himself, and had come up with a care lodged in every dimple.

In a fortnight from that time Lily Katy was duly installed sole sovereign of the sixteen square feet enclosed within the walls of a district school-house, some three or four miles from

Peltonville; and, of course, she was no longer a child. She was very small, and very young, and there were many wise shakes of the head when she first assumed her responsibilities; but soon all acknowledged that she was so "pretty-spoken," and so discreet withal, that she was fully competent to take charge of her dozen and a half abecedarians. And she was a miracle of a little teacher. The fat, shy ragamuffins that gathered around her knee advanced surprisingly in their primitive lore; and Lily Katy soon became the pet of the whole district. The Chifferings, living in the large, white house, with three butternuts and a black cherry-tree in front; the Beltons, a more intellectual but less wealthy family, occupying the low, brown house at the foot of the hill; and the Thompsons, a respectable family of widowed women-folks, on the cross road around the corner, all took her into especial favor. It was at the Chifferings', however, that Katy made her home; because they had a roomy house, roomy hearts, and three bouncing, good-natured daughters, (the two sons, of course, had no influence in the case,) who would have served the little school-mistress on their knees, if a glance of her sweet blue eyes had but bidden them.

Before many weeks passed Katy had become a mighty queen, with every family within two miles of her *seat of government* for dutiful subjects. But this was not all; her fame had spread into the neighboring districts.

One night, on returning from school, Katy observed a horse tied to one of the butternuts in front of Mr. Chiffering's, cropping the fresh grass very lazily, as though it were no new thing to him, and only resorted to by way of killing time. "So-ho!" thought the little lady, "company!" and then she smoothed the folds of her dress, and peeped over her shoulder to see that the flaxen ringlets were doing no discredit to their dainty resting-place; for there was something about the sleek steed and his belongings that spoke well for his master. "So-ho!" repeated the lady, with an arch smile, bending her slight figure a very little, and peering away up among the apple-trees. "So-ho! master dandy! you are not usually on

such intimate terms with the Chifferings, I dare say." And there, sure enough, under the shadow of the old farmer's favorite "graft," his heel kicking the turf most unmercifully, stood a slender, girlish-looking youth, almost as white as herself, in earnest conference with the two broad-shouldered young Chifferings. But Katy had no more time for observation. She had just become visible to the inmates of the house, and she now found herself forcibly seized upon by her three friends, and borne away to the privacy of an upper bedroom; while all together proceeded to unfold an exceedingly rich budget of news. The pretty youth in the orchard was Arthur Truesdail, son of old Farmer Truesdail, of Crow Hill; but his errand was the important matter. There was a beautiful piece of woodland within his father's domain, and this was destined to be the scene of a grand pic-nic, to which all the young people for six miles round would be invited. Arthur was a college boy, just come home to spend his summer vacation, and, of course, (in spite of beaver and broadcloth,) the *belle* of the neighborhood. And very *belle*-like, indeed, looked the girlish youth, there beneath the apple-trees; with the bright curls peeping from beneath his cap of purple velvet, and his white hand coquetting with Robert Chiffering's awkward mastiff. There was a roguish twinkle in the eye of Lily Katy, as she watched him from the window; but it was the only expression she gave to any opinion she might have formed of the delicate youth on whom her friends were expending their eloquence.

"And it is all got up for your sake," was the concluding point of Miss Amanda Chiffering's discourse; "they want to get acquainted with you."

However bright Lily Katy's eyes might be, and however freely she might use them, she was neither vanity nor amusement-proof; and while her little heart went pit-a-pat at thought of the honor done her, her head was nearly turned with its anticipatory delight. She, however, smoothed down her features enough to go through the formality of an introduction to the blue-eyed collegian, when Robert Chiffering

brought him in to tea; but smiles were constantly gathering on her face, and her little fingers were most grievously afflicted with a tremor, that seemed to have its origin in her dancing eyes.

How happy was Lily Katy when she went to her pillow that night! and how she wished that everybody could know what a fine thing it is to be a school-mistress!

The day for the pic-nic came at last, though never a dame in Christendom watched "boiling pot" as those hours were watched. The day came, and it was a glorious one—a tithe too hot, may-be, but it would be only the more delightful in the woods, with the breezes wandering about, cooling themselves on the fresh leaves, and the silver-voiced brook sending up its healthful breath with its music, to add to the attractions of the sylvan dining-room.

The "big team"—the springless wagon and span of fat plough-horses—stood before Farmer Chiffering's door, and Katy's foot was resting on the round of the old kitchen chair, that was wont to perform the office of carriage-steps, when Arthur Truesdail's *buggy* came whisking around the corner. There was a short, embarrassed conference; and then, notwithstanding a deal of amusingly sly hesitation on her part, Katy was transferred from the lumber-wagon to a more honored seat at the left hand of the fair-haired college youth.

Oh! how Lily Katy was envied that morning! how simple-hearted, blush-colored damsels longed for just wisdom enough to be school-mistresses! and how Arthur, and Arthur's new frock coat, and Arthur's fine turn-out were admired and readmired! But Katy was not the only object of envy. It was certainly no small honor to sit at the right hand of the pretty school-mistress; and there was a provoking consciousness in the manner of young Truesdail, which invited rather than deprecated envy. Ah! Katy *was* beautiful! The folds of jaconet hung about her lily-o'-the-valley figure like snow wreaths; and her small straw hat, with the bright cluster of opening rose-buds resting against its crown, just peeped over the flaxen curls enough to catch a glimpse of her sunny eyes,

without overshadowing them in the least. And then that most bewitchingly little hand, and the still more bewitchingly little foot, neatly cased in glove and gaiter! Arthur Truesdail had a very charming vision of a horseback ride every time he ventured to look down at the little, bird-like looking thing peeping from beneath the envious hem; and all for the sake of the half-minute that he might take that wicked brain-turner of a foot into his palm, while lifting its owner to the saddle. As the buggy rolled up to the front door of an immense red farm-house, that, but for its size, would certainly have been lost in the luxurious wilderness of lilac-bushes, and roses, and hollyhocks surrounding it, a young man broke from a bevy of red-cheeked girls that stood smiling in the doorway, and hurried to the gate to welcome Lily Katy.

The school-mistress had only time to hear, "My brother Philip," and to smile and shake her curls toward a very serious-looking face, before she was lifted to the ground and led away to the group awaiting her; "my brother Philip" being left to care for the horse, while the collegian devoted himself to his pretty lady.

"I wonder what makes him so melancholy-like this gay morning," thought Katy, as her eye turned for a moment on Philip Truesdail; and when he returned and joined the company that was to proceed across the fields to the woods, she again looked into his serious face with wonder. It *was* strange; and Katy, being too young to believe seriousness quite compatible with happiness, began to feel very kindly toward him, and to shape her sentiments and fashion her words with a glance of thought toward him, whatever direction her eye might chance to take the while. And Philip seemed to appreciate her efforts; for he began to smile, and his blue eye grew beautifully dark while looking forth an answer to her bright words. It may be that Arthur appreciated them too, for he placed himself close beside her, and devoted himself to her so exclusively as to appropriate every word and glance.

"You must distribute your attentions a little," Katy heard

the elder brother whisper to her cavalier, "or you will offend everybody."

"Confound everybody!" was the answer; "I will speak to those I like, and leave the distributing to you. You can play the devoted to one as well as another, Phil; but this little lady likes me, and I like her, and we shall have it all our own way."

Saucy enough was the smile that flitted across Lily Katy's face at the confident tone of the young collegian; and a world of arch malice sparkled in her eyes when they again fell upon him. Arthur Truesdail paid dearly for that one speech; but, as his complacency evaporated, his gayety rose; and so the party should have given Lily Katy a vote of thanks.

And "my brother Philip?" Why, he very nearly forgot his own cautionary advice, and scarcely lost sight of Katy through the day. Once, the school-mistress found herself beside him, away in the depths of the woods, with her feet resting on a rich carpet of golden moss; the flashy brook singing and chattering about nothing close before them, and the busy trees nodding and whispering above her head, as though they knew a great deal more than they chose to tell. She found herself there, but how she came there was the question; and why she stood, and stood so contentedly, when she knew that her host should be "distributing his attentions."

Philip Truesdail was nearly ten years older than his brother, and no match for him in any respect, if the family or family's friends were allowed to be the judges. There was a womanly tenderness in his large blue eyes, but they received an entirely different expression from the coal-black fringes shading them; so that only those on whom they had rested in compassion or affection, read anything there but good-natured indifference. His hair, too, was black; and his complexion, except a narrow strip belting the top of the forehead, was of a deep tan color, enriched by the healthful blood that had been denied his brother's pale, girlish cheek. There was something in the manner of the serious young farmer

so studiously watchful of her comfort and convenience, so entirely unselfish in its devotion, that irresistibly attracted the little lady; and his language seemed to her chosen from the books which she read and loved the best. That was the reason why she did not propose returning to the rest of the party, when she found they had wandered so much farther than she had intended, and that was the reason that, when she heard approaching footsteps, she almost unconsciously led the way farther on; for voices always assume a different tone when they speak to more than one listener. Her quick eye, too, had read at a glance enough to interest her sympathies irrevocably on the side of Philip. During the ten minutes that she had spent in the house, she saw that his position in the family was by no means commensurate with his merits; and this discovery performed almost as great wonders for the unpretending farmer, as the recital of his sufferings and "hair-breadth 'scapes" did for the Moor, Othello. Then he was so old, and so brotherly! Alas for Lily Katy!

The day went like a sweet dream to the simple-hearted girl; and when night came, she had much, very much, to *remember*, but only a little to *tell*.

Katy went early to her school-house the next morning, for the noisy gayety of the Chifferings seemed of a sudden distasteful to her; and she longed for the stillness of some kind of solitude. She was half-way there, when a horse bounded from before the door, and dashed up the hill at a furious rate. Could Katy have been right? or was there a vision of yesterday yet in her eye? She thought the rider was Philip Truesdail. Wondering, and doubting, and guessing, and asserting within her own mind, the little school-mistress tripped onward, all the time watching the spot where the horseman disappeared against the sky. She reached the door, and laid her hand upon the latch, her eye still resting upon the top of the hill, and there she stood, with her head leaned against the door-post, and her hands crossed on her bosom, until linsey-woolsey, bare feet, and dinner-baskets peering in sight, reminded her that dreaming was not her

whole business. Lily Katy's task, however, looked dull to her that morning; her little people missed their accustomed smile; and she dropped herself into her big chair, with a half-formed determination of betaking herself, with her troop of noisy tyros, to green walls and blue roof—a second Plato. But what was that lying upon her desk? Surely none of her embryo philosophers could make up such a bouquet! There were bright young rose-buds, the slender green arms in which they had so long nestled still clasped about them, as though loath to give them up to an untried world, or striving to shield them from such robbers as the sun and the breezes; and pansies, with their purple eyes full of sweet, loving thought; and the magic daisy, spreading abroad its tell-tale petals, as though asking to be inquired of;—the dark, glossy green of the myrtle threw into beautiful relief the snowy bells of the lily, her own cognominal; and many a delicate flowering thing peeped from beneath a sheltering leaf, or sat in state upon its own slender stem, like a queen upon her throne.

Lily Katy took up the beautiful mystery very carefully, and turned it over in her hands, and thrust the tips of her taper fingers beneath the leaves, to discover all they concealed, and wondered and guessed within herself, her lips all the time parted with a surprised smile, and a radiant light breaking from her blue eyes and spreading itself over her face. But why did her cheek crimson and her bosom palpitate? She was thinking over the Thompsons, and the Beltons, and her other friends, but was it that she believed her gift came from them? Ah, no! Lily Katy made a great wonder of the matter, even to herself; but there was something whispering her all the time the whole and exact truth. In peering among the stems, she found a slip of paper, with the words "FOR THE LOVELY 'LILY'" written upon it, in a round, fair hand, that Katy would have been delighted to transfer to her copy-books, and that she put carefully away between the leaves of her little morocco-covered Testament.

"The lovely Lily" said not a word to the Chifferings of her mysterious bouquet; but it could not have been because

she set too light a value on it; for never lingered life in flowers so long as in those.

That pic-nic party was the beginning of a — friendship. Days and weeks passed away, and Philip Truesdail and the pretty school-mistress, were to each other, as people said, “like brother and sister.” And they said, too, that it was very kind of Phil to give so much of his time to Lily Katy, since his more showy brother had taken such a violent fancy to romping Nell Chiffering; though, to be sure, he could not make up for the loss of Arthur.

In large towns people are annoyed by conventionalism; in villages by gossip; but if you would be entirely free, if you would act on all occasions precisely as you please, leave all “settlements,” and go out where it is at least a good half mile from hearth-stone to hearth-stone. Phil Truesdail drove over to the school-house as often as he listed, and took Katy into his buggy, and nobody said a word about it, except “what a good young man is Phil.” Sometimes he came on horseback, (the buggy being appropriated by his brother Arthur,) and then they sat in the school-house together, and read volumes of poetry, and perhaps talked poetry, until the moon came out; and then those moonlight walks! Nobody said a word about them, however. Certainly it was very kind in Philip Truesdail to devote himself so exclusively to Lily Katy; for his presence saved the poor school-mistress many a wearisome hour. Oh, yes! kind, very — to himself. To him, this was a strangely sweet intercourse; he seemed to be living and moving in one of those bewitching dreams that had haunted him since boyhood. Perhaps there never was a man who had reached his five-and-twentieth summer, preserving the singleness of heart, the simplicity of character, and the guileless purity that marked this friend of Lily Katy. Born with an eye for seeing and a heart for feeling, he had exercised both within the precincts of “Crow Hill;” and so every plant was known and loved, every pebble had a familiar look to him, every ripple, every murmuring breeze, and every sweet feathered thing, spoke a language that he could per-

fectly understand. He gathered lessons of philosophy from the field, and poetry from the woodland; then he read of them in books, his own heart being the crucible in which the metal was tried, and appropriating only the pure gold. He found his companions and friends where he guided the plough and wielded the sickle; and it was seldom that he mingled with human beings, for there was something in their rude tones that jarred upon the refined harmony of his spirit. But there was no discord in the voice or sentiments of Lily Katy; for she had just begun life, and her nature was full of the romance of its morning. The chivalrous devotion of Philip Truesdail had a witchery about it, that, young as she was, she more than half suspected would one day be lost; and it was this single grain of worldly wisdom, mingling with the enthusiasm of girlish fourteen, that induced Lily Katy to shut her eyes resolutely upon everything tending to break the charm. But yet, good and gentle as Katy was, there was a single vein of coquetry (innocent, pleasing coquetry to anybody but Philip Truesdail) about her, which originated many a shadow.

Katy was in the garden at Crow Hill, (for old Farmer Truesdail had daughters whom the school-mistress sometimes visited,) and Philip, as usual, was beside her. He had platted a wreath, and she stood smilingly, like a pet lamb, while he adjusted it among her light, silken curls; but when he picked, in a marked manner, a rose-bud, and, touching it to his lips, was about adding it to the fragrant tiara, she shook it gayly from her head and placed her foot upon it.

"Nay, nay, cousin Phil," (Katy always used the convenient prefix,) "you will spoil my head-dress with these heavy additions; and I dare say you have made me look like a fright now—hav'n't you?"

Katy did not note the expression—half of chagrin, half of involuntary pain—with which her companion turned to another topic; and neither did he note her hand soon after creeping down among the grass, to recover the rejected symbol of what had never been spoken

Speedily passed the summer ; the mellow autumn opened, and Philip Truesdail was no more the declared lover of his Lily than on the first day they met. But his tongue could have said little in comparison with what the fair maiden had been told a thousand times, in more eloquent language. And she understood it all, and thought it then sufficient. What need was there that Katy should grow wiser ?

They met for the last time on such terms—the pretty school-mistress and her adopted cousin.

“ And you will go back to your gay village, and forget this place that you have made such a heaven to me, and perhaps laugh at the rude farmer that has dared to—to call you cousin, Katy.”

Lily Katy shook her head.

“ You will take the light from my heart, Katy, when you go away ; and there will be no melodious sound for my ear, because your voice will be making music for others ; and no sight to charm my eye, because your eye will be away, and cannot look on to give it its coloring. Oh, Katy ! I shall be doubly lonely when you are gone ! ”

There was a dewiness in the young girl's eye, as she turned it upon the murmurer.

“ You will have the woods, cousin Philip, and the brook that we have sat beside, and the lilies that you planted in the corner of the garden, because, you said, they were like me, and the rose-bushes that I helped you to trim, and the room where we have read so many beautiful things together, and all the places where we have been—*you* will have them all. You should not complain, cousin Philip.”

“ And would you take any of them from me—would you have them yours, if you could, dear Katy ? ”

“ Perhaps—perhaps—um ! ” and Katy looked up as mischievously as her quivering lip would let her.

“ I would give you one for a remembrancer, if you could take it away, but it would be a hard thing for me to spare more.”

“ And I do not need the remembrancer, Cousin Philip ;

my memory never requires jogging where my friends are concerned. But let us change the subject,—we are getting mopish.”

“It is our last evening, dear Katy—I have never troubled you by talking about myself much, but now—”

“And do not now, Phil—pray don’t.”

“Is it such a very disagreeable subject, then?”

“No, no! it is too—I mean it is of course interesting, but —there will be time for all that, cousin when you come to Peltonville.”

“And *may* I come, Katy?” inquired the young man with a kindling eye, and holding back his breath to catch the answer.

“May you!” returned the little lady, laughing; “you do not suppose we are so inhospitable as to shut the door upon our cousins. But maybe you will not wish to come, and in that case I shall not urge you—eh, Cousin Phil?”

“God bless you, Katy! If I could only know that we shall meet as we part now!”

A shadow passed over the clear young brow of Lily Katy; it must have been a foreboding of evil, for she replied almost mournfully

“People never meet as they part, Philip; and for one, I wish there was no such thing as parting.”

The young man’s eye brightened.

“And would you be content at—where you have spent the summer, dear Katy?”

“I could not find a better place.”

“And in such company?”

“Company makes places—nay, Cousin Phil, do not thank me too warmly I have had a variety of company, you know.”

The young man turned away with an air of disappointment.

“Come back, Philip, come back, and take that curl out of your lip; and, since you are bent on making me say silly things first hear me. The company of my good cousin,

Philip Truesdail, is all that would keep me from Peltonville. Are you satisfied?"

The young man seized the small hand that was raised to urge his return, and pressed it hastily to his lips, then dropped it by her side, and stood back a moment to look into her crimsoned face; finally, advancing resolutely, he bent his lips to her ear, and whispered the few heart-warm words that came to them involuntarily.

"I am a little girl, only a little girl—you must not talk to me so, Cousin Phil," stammered Katy; "when I am older—"

"Will you love me then, dear Katy?"

"I—I do not know. Don't get angry again, Philip! don't! I love you now—with all my heart—and will forever and ever. Now make the most of that, and let go my hand, for I must go into the house this very minute."

Young Truesdail would have been better pleased had the little lady spoken less pettishly; and he resigned the hand, and turned homeward, with an air that made Lily Katy exceedingly sorry for what she began now to consider her folly. She looked it all in her sweet, childish face, as she placed her hand gently within his, and whispered, "I will stay as long as you wish, Philip."

The face of the young farmer lighted up with joy; for the first time, he drew the simple girl to his heart; for the first time, their lips met, and then they sat down on the mossed bank together, and spent two golden hours as hours were never spent by them before. When the moon went down, hand in hand they proceeded homeward, and parted on the door-stone of the Chifferings, with vows of everlasting changelessness.

Lily Katy awoke next morning with a confused recollection of mingled pleasure and mortification, for which she could not at first account. But in the next moment a crimson blush overspread her face; and she nestled down, and closed her eyes, feigning sleep, for the sake of being left to her own thoughts. That she was happy could not be denied; but with her sense of happiness came the mortifying suspicion

that she had been won too easily. So there she lay, her pretty face half buried in the pillow, and the other half covered by her small hand, and revolved in her mind every word that had been uttered on the previous evening, until she satisfied herself that she had acted a very unmaidenly part; and, moreover, that Philip Truesdail ought to be punished for leading her into such folly. How dignified she would be when she next met him!

During this summer, so important to Lily Katy, Mr. Follansbe's *devotion to his country* had been rewarded by the gift of the office of county clerk; and it was thought that his salary, united with his lady's economy, would be sufficient for the support of his family. But the accession of *the needful* was nothing in comparison with the accession of consequence. Now the Follansbes were invited everywhere, and everybody was proud of their acquaintance; and Lily Katy was too beautiful not to receive a due share of this newly awakened homage. But did the little belle forget her farmer lover? Not she. Not a buggy-wagon stopped at her father's door but her heart fluttered like a newly caged bird; but it was a fortnight, a long, long fortnight, before the right buggy made its appearance. Katy saw it from an upper window, and clapped her little hands with delight. In a moment she was called down, but she must needs wait to dissipate the tell-tale blushes, and send the smiles back from her face to her heart; and she must not tremble, not in the least, for she had resolved on behaving with a great deal of propriety this time.

While Katy stood before her glass smoothing down her features to a proper degree of demureness, Philip Truesdail sat bolt upright in the room below, almost dreading to hear the well-known sound of her foot; wondering how he could have been so foolish as to stake his happiness on such a desperate throw, and resolving to tell the child at once that he considered her in no wise bound by words which her generosity might have prompted her to utter at a moment when she had no time for thought.

With such reflections on either side, is it strange that they

met coldly? that misunderstanding followed misunderstanding? that Katy was unreasonably exacting, though every word she uttered warred against her heart? and that Philip Truesdail was generous and self-denying, as he had always been, and disdained to follow up any advantage which he might have gained on that memorable moonlight evening? Five minutes of entire confidence on both sides would have set all right; but a word unspoken often causes a life-estrangement. And so, is it strange that Philip Truesdail and Lily Katy parted that night forever?

"Forever—forever!" sobbed the poor girl, as she flung herself on the sofa, even before the echo of her light, merry laugh had died on the air.

It was years before that mocking laugh died in the ears of Philip Truesdail.

"Forever—forever!" repeated Lily Katy, and then she promised herself that it would not be so; he would come back—she knew Philip Truesdail too well to believe he would leave her to such misery—he was so kind, so considerate, so true-hearted, and so forgiving—then a fresh burst of tears interrupted her comforting reflections.

The next morning, Lily Katy could not forbear telling her mother how miserable she was; but all the consolation she received was commendation for the good sense both evinced in parting so amicably. And so Katy had her trials to bear all alone. How she watched for that little buggy till the snow came! and then, how she sat by the window, and looked along the road, and wondered if she should know Philip Truesdail from the top of the hill in his winter dress. But no Philip Truesdail came, and spring found Lily Katy still watching. By this time, the fragile child had shot up into a tall, womanly looking maiden, and there were but few that called her Lily Katy now. It would have required a very superb lily to bear any resemblance to the blooming, beautiful Catharine Follansbe. But the lady's heart went back, like the dove to its resting place; and, though fast entering on her belle-ship, she would have given worlds, had

worlds been in her gift, to have lived over again her fourteenth summer. Still, however, she be'ieved that Philip Truesdail would return; but return he never did.

Years passed, and Mr. Follansbe rose from a county officeholder to the state legislature, and from a legislator to a representative; and simple Lily Katy was merged in the elegant and fashionable Miss Follansbe. And was Philip Truesdail remembered still? Perhaps. Those soft blue eyes flashed now with pride and spirit, the delicate lip curled sometimes with scorn, and the beautifully curved neck arched itself like that of a tropical bird conscious of its own matchless charms; even the voice, with its smooth, measured cadences, sounded not like the low, warbling tones of Lily Katy; and, in place of simplicity and artless sentiment, came words of wit and sometimes of wisdom. Did this elegant creature, delicate and fastidious as she was, ever give a thought to the sober-faced farmer jogging after his plough behind the red farmhouse on Crow Hill? and was that the reason why she turned so coldly from her crowd of suitors, and called herself still heart-whole? No. She never thought of the rude farmer, earning his bread by the sweat of his brow; but there was away in her heart of hearts an ideal image that always stole away the point from any arrow that the winged god might send thither. This image was originally that of Philip Truesdail; but she had so renewed and moulded it over, that it now bore no resemblance to its former self. Who could have believed that the gay, *heartless* Miss Follansbe was cherishing a deathless affection? Who would believe that half the world are doing so, even while they laugh at truth and faith?

Miss Follansbe was entering on her four-and-twentieth spring when she went to spend the green season at her old home of Peltonville. Her smile was eagerly courted, and a nod, even, was considered worth a deal of scrambling; but still people had their remarks to make. The milliner, the grocer, and the tavern-keeper's wife, all said she had grown shamefully aristocratic; and old Mrs. Hudson winked her

little black eyes very meaningly, as she intimated to everybody that she had seen the time when the Follansbes were no better than their neighbors. But the proud lady minded none of these things. The deeper the murmurs, the more cause she gave for murmuring. She had been at Peltonville but a few weeks, when she began to feel an earnest desire to visit the scene of her first and only school-teaching. She had not seen it since the bright autumn day on which she left—and why? *She* could have told why; but no one else would have dreamed it. Now she would see if the little sacred spots she had cherished in memory were the same; and so she went. She recollected perfectly well that the old school-house was small and dirty, and of a weather-painted brown; but she could scarce believe it could have been *so* small, and *so* dirty, and *so* brown, ten years before. As for the children, she was confident that she had never watched over and loved such ill-looking ragamuffins as they were. And certainly there could have been no resemblance between the awkward, narrow-browed, square-shouldered country girl, with the shrill tenor voice, that occupied the chair, and her former self. But the dingle behind the school-house! the dear old woods that pictured themselves on her inward eye just as she had left them!—ah! change had been there. Not a tree was standing. Was it a tear that trembled on the dark lashes of Miss Follansbe? If so, it stood there but a moment, though she did not smile till she had left the school-house behind the hill. The young Chifferings were married, and the old people lived with their eldest son; the Beltons had moved away, and the Thompsons were dead, except an old woman that went out sewing by the day. Miss Follansbe went on, and without any settled purpose she directed the driver to Crow Hill. Perhaps she would go past—perhaps she would call. She had heard that the old people were dead, and the place was in the possession of Philip Truesdail and one unmarried sister. The lady's heart beat most unmercifully against her boddice, as the red farm-house hove in sight; and she allowed her carriage to go a quarter of a mile beyond before she could muster courage to give the necessary

order. Then the horses' heads were turned, and, in a moment she alighted at the door where she had first seen Philip Truesdail. But little change had been there; and slowly she walked up the narrow path between the rose-bushes, and tried to imagine herself Lily Katy, in the first freshness of beautiful girlhood. Lightly, and almost timidly, she tapped at the door, then more heavily, and then she substituted her parasol for her knuckles; but no answer came. Raising the latch, she stepped over the threshold, and found herself in the well-remembered parlor. There, nothing was changed, not even the position of a chair. The mantel-clock was ticking as of yore, and the old-fashioned vases stood on either side of it, with just such flowers in them as she had first received from Philip Truesdail. He had, of course, arranged them that morning, and Miss Follansbe blushed to find herself appropriating one of the prettiest; but with a tremor in her fingers, she fastened it in her boddy. She took a book from the table. It was the same she had read with him many a time, and there were traces of her own pencil on it, and, between the leaves, for a mark, a bit of riband that she recollected clipping one evening from her breast-knot. What would not the elegant lady have given to be simple Lily Katy once more. Oh, how many a heart-ache is wrapped up in the refinements of fashionable society, and the flippant follies of worldly wisdom!

Satisfied that no one was in the house, Miss Follansbe proceeded to the garden. How came back every word that had been spoken there!—every look, every light pressure of the hand; much that she did not rightly receive at the time, and much more that she did not rightly comprehend. And Miss Follansbe wished that she had been born in that neighborhood, and never “looked beyond the visual line that girt it round.” But still her lip remained firm and her eye unmoistened till she came to the little cluster of lilies, carefully weeded and that morning watered, that Philip Truesdail had planted there because they looked like her, while she stood by, and laughingly tried to lift the spade that seemed such a toy in his hands. Then her calmness gave way, her dignity all was

gone ; and Miss Follansbe leaned against the cherry-tree, by which she stood, and wept as she had scarce done since childhood. A rustling of the leaves startled her, and she wiped the traces of tears from her face, and turned with her usual self-possessed air to the intruder. A dark-complexioned woman, with her hair blown over her face, and a basket of cowslips on her arm, stood among the shrubbery, shading her eyes with her large, bony hand, and peering earnestly down into the garden. This should not have been the sister of Philip Truesdail, but Miss Follansbe recognized her as such immediately, and half of her touching recollections were dissipated. The lady introduced herself at once, and then *such* chattering, and such wondering ! Miss Truesdail insisted on blowing the horn to call her brother from the field ; and, though the lady said nay, she said it so faintly that the signal was given. It would be saying too much for Miss Follansbe's self-control not to own that her heart bounded, and her color went and came like a bashful school-girl's at the prospect of meeting her early lover, face to face, after the lapse of ten years. And when Miss Truesdail exclaimed, "There he comes !" it was some minutes before she ventured to turn her eyes in the direction designated. But when she did ! Miss Follansbe could scarce credit the evidence of her senses ; she *could not* suppress a smile. With an old torn straw hat in one hand, and the other supporting a hoe upon the shoulder of his striped frock, his figure stooping, and his eye fixed upon the ground, walked the man that Miss Truesdail had called her brother. He might have been mistaken for her father, and she was anything but youthful. Miss Follansbe thought of the flowers in the parlor, and the carefully trimmed shrubbery, and tried to argue herself into receiving her old lover as what he really was, rather than as what he appeared. He started when he heard the lady's name, and a quick flush passed over his face ; but it was gone in a moment, and he sat down at a respectful distance, and conversed calmly and sensibly, without apparently once remembering that they had ever met before. And a stranger would have thought they never had, till Miss Truesdail made mention of the fact.

‘ You would n’t have known Miss Follansbe, Philip ? ’

The man looked up.

“ She is very much changed.”

“ There is n’t much left like Lily Katy,” pursued the spinster, unconscious of the recollections she was awakening.

Her auditors were both silent.

“ But Philip is quite the same — some people never do change — I don’t see as he is altered in the least from what he was ten years ago — do you, Miss Follansbe ? ”

“ Not in the least,” echoed Miss Follansbe, with a demure look, which might be attributed either to the command she had obtained over the muscles of her face, or to a strange absence of mind.

There was a proud flash in Philip Truesdail’s eye, as he turned it for the first time full on the metamorphosed school-mistress.

“ Nay, lady,” he answered, “ even your system, the rules that govern you in the gay world, require not this sacrifice of truth. Say that I *am* changed. Why should I not be, as well as yourself ? My shoulders are bent, my hair is grizzled, my features are sharp, and there are wrinkles on my forehead ; but that is not all — I am changed more than that, and from this hour more than ever. But these are trifling things to you, Miss Follansbe.”

It was strange with what ease Philip Truesdail turned to other subjects, and with what fluency he conversed, preventing the possibility of his sister’s introducing topics more personal. In a half hour Miss Follansbe was handed into her carriage by the bachelor farmer ; and, while she leaned her head on her hand, and mused over the strange inconsistency of her own character, Philip Truesdail went whistling back to his labor. Neither was happy and neither was sad ; both were in a state of discomfort. They had been awakened from a long cherished dream, and the last spark of romance was extinguished in the bosoms of both.

And so Miss Follansbe went back to the world again ; and Philip Truesdail to his plough and his flowers, and his simplicity.

THE BANK NOTE.

"A PINK barége, with tucks—or a flounce—no! I like tucks better; let me think—how many? Half a dozen little ones look fixed up; one deep one, doubling the whole skirt, is very suitable for mamma, but it would be rather too heavy, too dignified for me; then two of moderate size—oh! they are so common! Never mind! Madam Dufraneau shall decide that matter. But I will have the dress, at any rate, and it shall be pink—just the palest and most delicate in the world—but pink it shall be, because of my dark eyes and hair, and fair complexion."

So soliloquized pretty Rosa Warner, a good-natured, thoughtless miss, of some thirteen summers, whose only troublous reflection was occasioned by the distance of bright sixteen, when her mother had promised she should be allowed to abolish short dresses, and gather up her jetty curls into a comb. And this would, indeed, be quite an era in the life of the little lady;—for she had no small pretensions to beauty, and was, moreover, the only child of a very wealthy father and a very fashionable mother. Oh! what visions she had of the future!

"Yes, I will have the pink barége," repeated Miss Rosa; and taking another peep at the mirror, to see that her dress would fully bear the scrutiny of her mother's critical eye, she tripped gayly down stairs, reached the landing with a light bound, and then, smoothing her features and her hair at the same time, placed her hand very demurely on the knob of the breakfast-room door. Her mother was there before her, and Rosa heard her say, as she entered, "I have no occasion for employing a stranger."

These words were addressed to a pale, thin girl, who stood just inside the door, with her head bent down, and the fingers of her ungloved hand trembling on the back of a chair before her.

"Perhaps," returned the girl, half hesitatingly, "perhaps those you employ need work less than I."

"I doubt it," returned Mrs. Warner; "a seamstress always needs work, and those whom I have tried, and know to be deserving, I esteem it my duty to give the preference to. There is sewing enough to be done, and no one who can use the needle skilfully need long go begging for work."

A sensation as of choking seemed struggling in the throat of the girl, and her fingers now clutched convulsively at the chair.

"I hope you may succeed in obtaining employment," observed Mrs. Warner, consolingly; "but really—"

"If you would but try me, lady!" sobbed the girl. "We are very poor—God knows if we shall starve!" she murmured, "and my poor, poor mother!"

Mrs. Warner did not hear the last words, for Rosa, notwithstanding her habitual fear of her mother, had glided up to her, and whispered "that Mary Jones could not come for a week, at least, and Alice Weaver was really to be married in a fortnight." This information induced Mrs. Warner to look again at the girl who stood trembling before her.

"Your name I think you gave as Ellen Vaughn?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And you live on S—— street?"

"We live there now."

"Can you make dresses?"

"Not well; I should not like to try."

"What can you do?"

"Almost every kind of needle-work—fancy and plain."

"Embroidery?" asked Mrs. Warner, with an incredulous smile.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And can you do nothing with dresses?"

"Not nice ones."

"Could you put together a morning gown after it was fitted?"

"Oh yes!"

"And make school-dresses for my daughter?"

"I have done it for others."

"For whom have you worked?"

"For no one in New York, lady. We left a country village, a few weeks ago, thinking we should do better here; but it was all a mistake. There is a great deal of work in the city, I dare say, but there are so many hands to do it. Oh! I am very sorry we came!" sighed Ellen Vaughn, shaking her head slowly.

"It is a common mistake," observed Mrs. Warner; "people seldom 'let well alone.'"

The girl opened her lips as though to reply, but was checked by a "second thought." Mrs. Warner seemed considering the subject a moment, and finally she decided. "I will employ you to-day, at least. Rosa, show Miss Vaughn to the back sitting-room, and give her the skirt of your muslin dress; I will see her before that is done."

Rosa obeyed; and the girl, turning back and hesitating for a moment, as though there had been something more she would have asked if she dared, slowly followed.

Mrs. Warner, as we have before said, was a very fashionable lady; yet she possessed more real feeling, more heart and soul, if one could only find the way to it, than would serve a whole clique of the ordinary stamp of fashionables. But there was one marked peculiarity about Mrs. Warner's *feeling*; it was not only capricious, but it would not be led. She was quick and ardent if left to her own impulses, but where others felt the most deeply, she manifested a strange obtuseness; and when she had reason to believe that people thought she ought to be affected, she was cold and calm as a winter moonlight. Yet but few persons could have had the hardihood to say that Mrs. Warner was whimsical. She was so evidently governed, even in her eccentricities, by high moral principle; there was so much that was noble and generous in her nature; and her personal presence was so imposing, that, between her pride and her finer qualities, she was generally too much feared and loved to be considered

a proper subject for the dissecting knife of gossips. Mrs. Warner owed her entire amount of peculiarities to a strong will that had never been checked, and a full consciousness of her own powers, both natural and social, slightly modified by conventionalism, and rendered fitful by occasional visitations of worldly wisdom. A more impulsive creature than she was in childhood never existed ; but, on mingling with the world, it had been her misfortune to meet with imposition oftener than gratitude. It was thus that she had learned a kind of suspicion, which frequently made her unjust ; and it was not unusual for her to say and do things worthy of the most iron-hearted. In her family she was kind, but authoritative ; and neither Rosa, nor the two cousins dwelling under the roof with her, thought it by any means a minor matter to encounter her frown. And, if truth must be told, it was no pleasant thought to Mr. Warner that he had incurred his lady's displeasure. To be sure she was no virago ; she never raised her voice high, nor did she ever murmur or chide him. These are the resorts of weakness. But there was something in the fiery flash of that big black eye, in the curl of the short upper lip, in the deliberate straightening up of the fine Grecian figure—and the biting sarcasm of the single sentence, (she never deigned to utter more,) dropping with such bitterness from lips that could smile most sweetly, which any man would gladly avoid.

Rosa Warner accompanied the seamstress to the room designated, without speaking a word ; for her gayety felt itself rebuked in the presence of sorrow, and the easy, merry-hearted child grew timid and thoughtful. She took with a very gentle hand the girl's bonnet, and selected the easiest chair, and brought an ottoman for her feet ; and then she adjusted the shutters with unusual care, and looked about to see that the room was pleasant as well as comfortable, before she brought the work as directed by her mother.

" You will find the sewing very light, Miss Vaughn," she said, kindly, on presenting it, " and you need make no haste ; it will be a good many days before I need the dress." And,

without waiting a reply, she slipped out of the room, and made her way down to the breakfast table.

"Poor girl!" thought Rosa Warner, as she went, "she must be very unhappy. Her eyes look as though she had cried a week. I never could bear tears, they make a simpleton of me. Dear! dear! how I should hate to be a sewing girl, particularly for mamma; her eyes would scare me into doing everything wrong. What fine eyes mamma has, though! I hope mine will be like them; they are almost as dark now, but they cannot flash so. I think mamma would make a better queen than Victoria. Cousin Will called her a complete Zenobia. That I should let Will know what a fool I am! I declare, there is no use at all in studying history at school — one never knows anything about it."

Rosa had proceeded so far in her soliloquy, when the thought of the pink barége entered her giddy little head, and immediately every other thought left it. She even forgot to say good morning to her father and cousins; a neglect of proper etiquette for which she was duly reproved.

Mrs. Warner was not in a very good humor this morning; a state of feeling to which the information that had induced her to engage the seamstress contributed not a little; for it annoyed her exceedingly to find that Mary Jones and Alice Weaver had presumed to exhibit so much independence. What right had Mary Jones to engage work of other people until quite sure that Mrs. Warner did not want her, when she owed the ability to obtain work at all, to that lady's influence? And what right had Alice Weaver to be married, just as she had learned to support herself handsomely? She would, without doubt, tie herself to some miserable fellow who could not take care of himself, and then would come the old story of a suffering family. It *was* vexatious that people whom Mrs. Warner had obliged, would not submit themselves entirely to her guidance; consent to become automata in her hands, and find their happiness in the pursuits which she decided ought to make them happy. It was this perverseness, which would now and then exhibit itself, in spite of the

general empire enjoyed by Mrs. Warner, that had this morning vexed and annoyed her; and a great share of this vexation was likely to fall on the head of the new seamstress, for the reason that the old ones had, in the lady's view of the subject, exhibited a strange lack of gratitude. In short, Mrs. Warner had donned a new fit of worldly wisdom, and poor Ellen Vaughn, would, probably, suffer from it.

Full of the pink barége, as soon as breakfast was over, Rosa had a long, and confidential communication with her father. He was not difficult of persuasion; and, though he rallied her a little on her extravagance, and *played off* for the sake of listening to her pretty arguments, he at last put the money into her hand, and referred her to her mother. This was much the most delicate part of the negotiation; for, though Rosa was seldom denied a gratification of this character, and felt now pretty confident as to the result, yet she stood too much in awe of her mother to feel much pleasure in asking a favor. Notwithstanding, when the favor was granted, she always wondered that she ever could have hesitated. Now, however, she was as much astonished by a prompt negative, as her lady mother was at her vanity and presumption; and she put the money back into her father's hand with a sigh, which went to the good man's heart. Rosa did not pay much attention to Ellen Vaughn that day, for she was sure that no trials could equal her own; and she was quite disgusted that any one who had not missed the chance of having a pink barége frock, should presume to be miserable. As evening drew near, however, a morning twilight began gradually to soften down the shadows on the face of Miss Rosa, and she did at last emerge from the clouds sufficiently to bestow one thought on poor Ellen Vaughn. It was as she stood by the door, bonnet in hand, fingers fidgeting with the latch, and the toe of her well worn shoe digging into the carpet.

"You may come again in the morning, if you wish," said Mrs. Warner, "as early as eight, recollect, and if you do as well as you have to-day—"

The lady checked herself before the promise of patronage was made; for, visions of the ungrateful Mary Jones and Alice Weaver passed before her mind's eye, and recalled, in a trice, all her worldly wisdom.

"Please, madam," stammered Ellen Vaughn, after waiting a little for the conclusion of the sentence; and then she rattled the door-latch, and dug her toe into the carpet more industriously than ever.

At another time Mrs. Warner would have encouraged the poor girl to speak on, but now she was in one of her unreasonably severe moods; so she only fixed her black eye (intensely and burningly black it was) on her in silence. Ellen quailed under it; and, as she did so, the short upper lip began to curl; for Mrs. Warner is not the first individual who has mistaken confusion of manner, arising from timidity or trouble, for the evidence of conscious guiltiness. The poor girl seemed ready to sink to the floor, from excess of agitation; but at last, making a desperate effort, she faltered out, "if you would only let me take the work home, lady!"

"Take it home?"

"My mother is sick, and —"

"*Very* sick?"

"I hope not dangerously — indeed, I do not know —"

"You have no physician, then?"

"No, lady, the poor cannot always —"

"The poor will receive the kindness they merit; this is not a country where the poor will be allowed to suffer, unless they bring suffering on themselves."

"Ah! lady —" began Ellen Vaughn, but Mrs. Warner's eye rested on her with such a look of cold inquiry, that she could not finish.

"Have you sisters, Miss Vaughn?"

"Two little girls — the eldest only seven."

"Are you afraid to leave your mother with them?"

"N — n — o! it is not so pleasant for her —"

"But it is better for her, and for you too. Here you have

a pleasant room, and nothing to disturb you ; but if you were there, you would have your attention constantly distracted."

" Oh ! I *would* do as much ! I am sure I could have —"

" Nobody can do two things at a time, and do them both well ; and I should not dare trust my work with you under such circumstances ;" and Mrs. Warner turned away, as though she considered the matter decided. Ellen Vaughn waited for a moment, as though unwilling to let the subject drop, and Rosa longed to interfere in her favor ; but neither had the courage to speak, and so the young girl turned lingeringly from the door.

" I do not like that girl's face," observed Mrs. Warner ; " she has a downcast look, and a sly, hesitating manner, that shows she has something to conceal. Give me a frank, open countenance ; there is always hope for such people."

Rosa wanted to say that a downcast heart, might be the occasion of a downcast look ; but she knew that her mother considered her physiognomical observations (as indeed who does not ?) infallible ; and she obeyed the dictates of prudence.

In the morning, Ellen Vaughn again made her appearance, but paler and sadder even than on the day previous ; and this day Rosa lingered pityingly around her, longing to ask the cause of her sadness, but restrained, in part by timidity, in part by delicacy.

" If she would only tell, perhaps I could do something for her," thought the sympathizing child ; but to ask her to tell, required more courage than good-natured little Rosa Warner could muster.

" That girl will worry my life away," exclaimed Mrs. Warner, in positive ill-humor, after Ellen Vaughn had completed her second day. " Her whining and teasing are too much to bear !"

Rosa and her two cousins dropped book and pencil and looked up inquiringly.

" She insists on having her pay every evening, and her stammering and whining are really provoking."

"Would it be inconvenient to pay her every evening, mamma?" Rosa ventured to inquire.

"Inconvenient! why it would be a positive injury to her. She would spend the money, as such people always do, as fast as she got it."

The heart, with the fresh, pure dew of its morning upon it, is much wiser than any head; and simple, artless Rosa Warner, in the sight of angels, was this evening far nearer the "hid treasure" than was her shrewd, honored lady mother. But Rosa could not gather courage to say to her mother, that Ellen Vaughn might *need* the money as fast as she earned it, or faster; that her stammering was occasioned by timidity, which none better than Mrs. Warner could inspire; and that in reality she had a right to demand her honest wages when she chose. No! No! Rosa would sooner have encountered a fiery dragon than the glance of those black eyes, after she had presumed to intimate that there was a bare possibility of her mother's having come to a hasty conclusion. So Rosa was silent; but she resolved in secret to win the confidence of the poor seamstress the next day.

There was a haggard look, and a harassed, almost wild expression, on the countenance of Ellen Vaughn, when she took her seat in the little sitting-room in the morning, which Mrs. Warner herself observed. The lady even condescended, notwithstanding her firmly fixed opinion of the young girl's unworthiness, to make some kind inquiries; but there is a spirit, even in the gentlest natures, which will not be pressed too far, and the feelings of resentment swelling in the bosom of poor Ellen Vaughn, were more in accordance with her partial views of Mrs. Warner's injustice, than with her meek, forbearing, uncomplaining disposition. She answered her questions in cold monosyllables, and, raising her work that her employer might not note the misery that *would* make itself visible in her face, she plied her needle with nervous earnestness. As for Rosa, she stood aghast at such a display of ill-nature in one who had so warmly enlisted her sympathies; and she revolved the subject in her mind all day, com-

ing to the conclusion at night, which she had seldom doubted — that her mother was always right. But, notwithstanding all this, her heart yet pleaded strongly in favor of poor Ellen Vaughn.

Thus passed another day, and Rosa had as yet made no advances towards gaining the confidence of the seamstress. About the hour, however, when the latter usually took her leave, a bright thought somehow found its way into the usually unthinking head of the little lady. She suddenly remembered that it was the most common thing in the world to inquire for the sick, and this might lead to a full revelation of all she wished to know; and, moreover, it occurred to her that if Miss Vaughn should acknowledge herself to be really in want, it would require but one of her own irresistible smiles to induce the cook to supply her with a basket of good things every evening. Full of these thoughts, so rational as scarcely to feel at home in that careless little head, Miss Rosa cast aside the worsteds that she had been assorting, and tripped away to the back sitting-room. Her step was as light as a fairy's; and though she had hummed the fragment of a tune at first starting, it ceased as soon as she left the parlor, and she reached the back sitting-room without having attracted the attention of its occupant. The door was ajar, and Rosa paused, like the unpractised little girl that she was, to consider what she should say. She did not intend to be a spy upon the seamstress, but it was perfectly natural that she should turn her eyes towards the crevice in the door; and as she did so, they fell upon the shadow of a person who seemed to be standing by her mother's escritoir. The person herself (for it was the shadow of a woman) was invisible; but Rosa thought at once of the seamstress, and at the same time she recollected seeing her mother with a bank note between her fingers while writing a letter, an hour previous. She had noted, too, even then, a strange look in the face of Ellen Vaughn, that showed she also saw it; and had observed her turn away her head after a single glance, and press her palms heavily on her eye-lids, with an exhibition of feeling which

she could in no wise interpret. Then Mrs. Warner was called suddenly away, and Ellen Vaughn turned her back upon the escritoir, and applied herself to her needle as though she had no thought disconnected from the unfinished garment in her hand. All these recollections came crowding upon the mind of the little girl, with a bewildering power. She attempted to move, but her feet seemed fastened to the floor; to turn her head, but her eyes would fix themselves on that shadow. Rosa would not have believed, an hour before, that anything short of imminent danger to herself could frighten her so. But now the moving of the shadow sent her heart fluttering into her throat; and when Ellen Vaughn immediately after stepped across her line of vision, and disappeared on the other side, she could scarcely suppress a scream. Should she tell her mother? But what had she to tell? She had seen only a shadow, and if it were Ellen Vaughn's, she might have been looking at a book or adjusting her hair at the mirror. Her mother's escritoir was not the only thing in that part of the room. So reasoned Rosa, meanwhile drawing back into the shadow of an opened door beyond, though her trembling limbs could scarce support her weight, and the beatings of her heart sounded to her frightened ear like the heavy strokes of a muffled bell. She had scarce gained this concealment, when the sitting-room door was pushed open cautiously; the ashen face of the seamstress peered forth, and her perturbed eye wandered up and down the hall with a quick, startled glance, as though she was afraid that the stairs and tables would find mouths to witness against her. One white, shaking hand, clutched the bosom of her dress, as though determined to defend her terrible secret, and the other was pressed against her haggard forehead, while two or three successive shivers passed over her whole frame. She trembled and reeled from side to side as she passed along the hall, starting at every sound, and turning with a scared look to gaze at each shadow that lay across her way, until she reached the door. Then, casting one hasty glance around her, she slipped through the opening

and closed it with a nervous quickness. Rosa noted all this; and, if she had been the guilty one, she could not have trembled more, or turned paler. Lightly she glided forth from her place of concealment, and hurried to her mother's escritoir. The half-written letter was there, and the pen, with the ink scarcely dried upon it, but the bank note had disappeared. What a faint, horrible feeling, crept to the heart of Rosa Warner! Not that she never heard of a theft before, but she had never been in the immediate vicinity of one—never *seen* it committed. Should she go to her mother now, and have the girl arrested in the public street, with that pale face and shaking hand to evidence against her? Immediately rose before her the agonized look of poor Ellen Vaughn; and then she thought of her, dragged away to prison, while perhaps the sick mother and the two little sisters of whom she had spoken were starving. True, it was right that the crime should be exposed, but *she* could not do it. She should never sleep again, if she allowed her hand to unseal the vial so full of misery. An older than herself must hold the balance that was to mete out justice; the tear-gem of mercy was a fitter ornament for one so young to wear. Rosa did not think these thoughts in these words, but the result was strikingly like; and yet, though she fully persuaded herself that no one need know what she had seen, her heart was heavy with its secret. These considerations had occupied scarce a moment, and now another project entered her head. She would know what Ellen Vaughn did with that money, and be governed in her conduct toward her entirely by that. Tying on a little straw bonnet, enveloping her figure in a sombre shawl, and drawing a green veil over her face, she passed hurriedly through the nail and followed the seamstress over the pavement. Ellen had disappeared; but Rosa knew the first corner, and she almost ran until she obtained a glimpse of the rusty black bonnet and faded dress. Ellen Vaughn had entirely lost her usual free step and air; there was a stoop in her figure, and a crouching, hesitating manner of moving, which showed the crime had written itself on her conscience, and was heaping

up the infamy within, which men might soon pour upon her head. She crept along stealthily, close by the railing, and Rosa could see, from the little distance she kept, the hand clutching the dress as it had done at first; and she could see, too, that it trembled but little less than it had done in the house. At another time, Rosa Warner would not have ventured on those dark, filthy back streets alone, but now, she did not once think of the strangeness of her situation, or the danger of being unable to find her way back again. The twilight was deepening, but she kept her eye on the moving figure before her, and her thoughts could not be on herself. At length the seamstress reached a large old wooden building, in a ruinous condition, the crazy shutters mostly hanging by one hinge, the windows stuffed with mouldy clothes, the clapboards loose upon the wall, and the whole structure settling to one side, and seeming as though a puff of wind might level it. As the girl set her foot upon the broken stairs, a boy, some dozen years of age, glided from beneath them, and laid his hand upon her arm, whispering, "Wait a minute, Nelly!—Hush! don't speak loud—they will hear us."

"Who?" inquired the girl, casting a glance of horror over her shoulder, as though capable of but a single thought.

"Mother and the children. Come this way, Nelly; I *must* tell you. I hav'n't earned a penny to-day—not a single one. Nobody would trust a bundle with such a looking boy as I; and nobody had a valise to carry, or a horse to hold—nobody, because we were starving, Nelly."

"John!"

"It may be that this is murmuring—sinful murmuring, as mother would say, but I cannot help it. The little girls have been crying with hunger for the last hour, and mother is worse, ten times worse—she will die, Nelly, and all for the want of a little money to pay a doctor. Oh! what will become of us?"

"I—I—have got ——" Ellen Vaughn began; but the words seemed to choke her, and she remained silent.

"But I hav'n't told you all, Nelly; mother has said strange things to-day; she has not been in her right mind, and when

I was gone, she frightened the little girls so that they left her alone."

Poor Ellen clasped her hands and looked upward; but, immediately, an expression of mingled fear and shame passed over her countenance, and she covered her face with her spread palms, saying, in a low, hoarse whisper, "We *must* do something for her, John."

"We can't—we *cannot*! Oh, Nelly! that money should buy health, and life! How can it be right?"

"We will have a doctor for mother."

"No! we can't! that is what I wanted to tell you. I have been everywhere—everywhere that I could find a '*Dr.*' on the sign-plate, and Nelly, not one of them will come—not one of them will stir from his door to save our mother's life."

"They must, for — for — I — have — got —" Ellen gasped for breath, and again stopped; while the brother, too much engaged with his own tale to heed her broken words, proceeded—"After that, I went into a store—there was a dollar—a large silver dollar, lying upon the counter, right in my way, and nobody saw me—"

"John!" shrieked the poor girl, staggering heavily against the wall.

"No! no! Nelly—I did n't take it! There were bad thoughts came into my mind; but I remembered you and mother—I knew that mother would rather die than be saved so; and I knew that you, Nelly, would never use *such* money; and I could not tell you a lie. No! no! I did n't take the money; but I don't think any better thought than that kept me from it. I am sure I should have done it, only I knew it would break your heart."

A loud, convulsive sob burst from the bosom of the poor girl, and her frame shook violently.

"Don't mind it now, Nelly, don't! The doctors made me mad, or I should never have felt so. But you need n't be afraid I shall be tempted again—oh no! not even for the sake of mother and the little girls."

Oh! how willingly would Ellen Vaughn have made her

mother's shroud with her own hands, and lain down to die with those she loved, so that it could have been done in honor and innocence. There is no misery like that which eats into the still lingering traces of God's image, and degrades us before ourselves.

"Don't cry, Nelly! don't!" exclaimed the boy, putting his arms about her neck, soothingly. "I shall have better luck to-morrow, I dare say; and all will come out right in the end. Mother said last night that it is all for our good — God is trying us to make us better; and, though I don't think so much about such things as I ought, I always feel as though nothing very bad could happen to us, when she lays her hand on my head — just as she used to on the ocean, Nelly — and talks of our Heavenly Father's knowing all about us, and taking care of us. Don't cry, Nelly, I shall be a man in a few years and then I can support us all. You shall not live in a garret then, Nelly." And the boy, as he spoke, straightened his arm, and set down his foot firmly, as though he longed for the strong frame that might wrestle with his wayward destiny.

One shiver passed over the sister, and made her teeth chatter momentarily, and then she dropped her hands from her face, and turning away her head, she drew the note from her bosom, and pushed it into the boy's hand. "I ought not to cry, John, for I have that which we most need. No doctor will refuse you now, and you can get bread for the children, too."

"Five dollars, Nelly!" and the boy's face brightened up with joy.

"Go as soon as you can, John! the children are crying with hunger, and mother worse — worse! God will forgive me," she murmured.

"But, Nelly, Mrs. Warner has not given you all this for three days' work, has she?"

"No matter, now — no matter — don't ask me anything about it — *I might* tell a lie!"

"No, no! but you don't want to tell the truth. I see how it is — Mrs. Warner has given you this for being good and

faithful, and you don't love to boast of your own goodness — just like you, Nelly.”

“Go! go!” gasped the poor girl; and as the brother sprang from her side, and bounded joyfully along the pavement, she turned her face to the wall and wept, and wrung her hands in utter abandonment. Rosa Warner longed to step forward and comfort her, but this was neither the time nor place; and she stood back, awe-stricken, until the girl, brushing away her tears, and trying to call up a look of cheerfulness, began to mount the stairs. Then the child, for the first time reminded of her own situation, drew her veil more closely about her face, and, without giving one look to the gloomy piles around her, or the star-lighted sky above, turned back and fled like a frightened fawn homeward.

Rosa was by no means sure of her way, for she had noted nothing when she came but Ellen Vaughn. We never know our own resources till necessity moulds them into a spade, and puts it into our hands, bidding us work. Rosa Warner, the timid, delicate, thoughtless child, that had scarce ever been allowed to use her own judgment, even in the selection of a riband for her hair, lost in the dark of evening, in a spot given up to wretchedness, if not to vice! But Rosa was scarce alarmed: her mind was preoccupied. Now and then she paused at a corner, in embarrassment; then she would renew her speed, and press onward, taking care to observe a course which she knew led into a more familiar part of the city. By this means, she avoided losing herself among obscure turns and windings, and, although she was taking a long way home, she was soon convinced of the wisdom of her plan, by finding herself on well known ground. As soon as Rosa Warner reached home, she proceeded to the parlor, and was delighted to find her father alone.

“You recollect that pink barége, papa?” she said, crossing her hands on his shoulder.

“Yes, I have cause; it spoiled my daughter's face for a whole day.”

“Because I had set my heart on it, and was so disap-

pointed. But no matter about it, now ; I want to ask you something else, papa. Would you give me the money that it would cost — would you give me five dollars, if you knew that I would put it to a good use ?”

“ I could not know, my daughter, that you would put it to a good use, without being told what you proposed doing with it. Misses with short frocks,” he added, tapping her chin playfully, “ are no good judges in these matters.” Tears came into the little girl’s eyes, and they were not unobserved by the father. He put his arm about her and drew her to his knee.

“ How now, Rosa ? have you such a very hard father that you cannot tell him your little secrets ? Now I have so much confidence in your discretion, that I promise you the money beforehand, and you must have enough confidence in my desire to gratify you, to tell me all about your little project — it is a nice one, I dare say.”

“ It may not be, papa — perhaps it is wrong, but —”

“ Then tell me, and I will help you judge.”

Rosa hesitated. She had full confidence in her father’s generosity and goodness of heart ; but then she knew that he was strict in the administration of justice, and there was a crime in the way, which she could not but look upon with abhorrence. How much more severely then, might her father, not seeing the palliating circumstances as she could see them, judge of the matter.

“ Indeed, papa, there is something that I do not feel at liberty to tell even to you ; if it concerned myself I would — you know I always have done so ; but this —”

“ I am sorry people should burden my little girl with their secrets.”

“ Nobody has. All I know is partly by accident, partly my own — fault. But papa, allow me to tell you a little, and do not ask me to speak plainer. Five dollars,” — and Rosa now spoke quick and fervidly, while her eye avoided her father’s, her cheek flushed, and her lip quivered — “ five dollars will save a poor, sick family from misery, from disgrace.

Perhaps they are not worthy—I do not know—but they need it—they are suffering—will you give it to me, papa?”

Closely closed the arms about the excited daughter, and the father's voice was not quite clear, as he inquired, “why not go to your mother, Rosa?”

“I cannot—there are good reasons why I cannot. May I have the money, papa?”

“These secrets are bad things, my dear, but—I will trust you.”

“No! do *not* trust me!” exclaimed the child, vehemently. “What I do may be wrong—I am afraid it is. Do not *trust* me—think nothing about it either way—forget, dear papa, that you have given me this money.”

The father shook his head doubtingly, but at the same time he drew forth the note and put it into her hand.

“One more favor, papa; may this be a secret between us two?”

“Rosa, I do not approve of these secrets—honest people never have them. Your mysteries do not please me at all; and, I cannot encourage or tolerate them—they begin with this, and with this they must end.”

“They shall, papa; but, if you knew all, you would not *blame* me, at least.”

“I do not blame you, my dear; I do not doubt your motives; but I must not allow you to contract bad habits. Manœuvring to do good is manœuvring still; and, where so much machinery is necessary, the end seldom justifies the means. It takes an old head to carry a secret, a very old one—mine is less black than it was once; but it is not old enough to be so burdened yet. And yours—why these pretty ringlets are a strange wig for one knowing in the ways of the world,—they should not cover a brain given to plotting and conjuring.”

“Papa, you mistake me, altogether; I have not looked for a secret, but it came to me; and now I do what seems to me best. I shall never be deceitful, I know I never shall. If

every mystery vexes me like this, I am sure I shall avoid another."

"So be it, my child."

"Thank you, dear papa," and leaving a kiss on both cheeks, Rosa slid from her father's knee, and left the apartment. Gaining the hall, she paused a moment, for there were voices in the back sitting-room, and she caught a word or two that told her the note had been missed.

What was to be done now? The last moment spent with her father had ruined her plan; and now that the discovery had been made, of what use was the note she had obtained to replace the lost one? The frank acknowledgment of the existence of a secret, that had succeeded so well with her father, would be entirely useless here; for Mrs. Warner would never rest until the whole was thoroughly investigated. Rosa was about giving up all, and going back to the parlor, when the thought of poor Ellen Vaughn, the confiding brother, the sick mother, and the hungry little girls, came freshly into her mind, and she resolved to make one more effort. Reaching the door, she again paused; for she felt her limbs shake, and knew by the chill which passed over her frame, that she must be very pale. She stood for a moment striving for composure, and then pushed open the door. The moment she entered, one of her cousins glided up to her, and, with consternation depicted on her face, whispered, "What think you, Rosa, aunt has lost a five dollar note."

"She left it in an unsafe place," observed Miss Rosa, with well-feigned carelessness, and elevating the note above her head.

"Rosa Warner!" exclaimed the lady, sternly, and with one of her withering glances, "where learned you to practise tricks on your mother? Go to your room!"

Rosa turned without a word, and bursting into tears before she reached the hall, hurried up the stairs and threw herself, sobbing, on her own bed. Her *ruse* had succeeded well, but she had incurred the anger of her mother, and her conscience told her that she deserved it all, and more. "*I am* deceit-

ful!" she repeated to herself more than a dozen times that night, and over and over she resolved to confess the whole the very next morning. But when morning really came, it brought quite a different state of feeling. Mrs. Warner seemed to have forgotten the affair of the last evening; and Rosa, persuaded that she had saved the poor girl from ruin, did not regret the means she had taken to accomplish it. She felt some flutterings of heart when eight o'clock drew near; and started every time the door-bell rang, glancing from the window to see if she could get a glimpse of the black bonnet; but eight passed, and nine came and passed, and no seamstress appeared. Mrs. Warner grew impatient; for though not pleased with Ellen Vaughn's face, she was obliged to own that in the use of the needle she combined celerity and skill. Ten came round, and still no Ellen Vaughn.

"She must be ill," suggested Rosa; "may I go and see, mamma?"

"You will not know where to find her."

Rosa blushed; here was another concealment. "Robert might go with me; you sent him home with Miss Vaughn once."

"True, Robert can go, and then there will be no need of your going."

"But if they should need assistance, mamma, it seems so much kinder for one of the family ——"

"You have taken a strange fancy to that girl," observed Mrs. Warner.

"She seems so unhappy!" murmured the child: but it was the starting tear, not the words, that pleaded her cause with her mother.

"You have yet a great deal to learn, my dear," said the proud woman, tenderly; "but still this girl may be in want; her mother may be worse, and I have no objection to your going to see. Get your bonnet, and in the mean time I will fill a basket for Robert to carry. We should never visit the poor without taking some comforts with us."

Mrs. Warner did not *always* think that comforts comprised only the things that could be stowed away in a basket; but for her prejudices, she would have gone herself to look after Ellen Vaughn; and when her heart was enlisted, no human being was ever more completely mistress of the whole vocabulary of consolation than she.

Strange emotions were swelling in the heart of pretty Rosa Warner as she tripped along beside the good-natured serving-man, for she thought of the evening previous, when Ellen Vaughn reeled over the pavement before her; and she wondered what good people—what her father and mother would think of her, if they knew she had been accessory to a theft. It made her shudder, and she resolved not to think of it. Then the conversation at the foot of the stairs came back to her, word by word; and she wished that her mother could have heard it, believing that if she could, she would forgive and pity poor Ellen Vaughn. The clapboards rattling at each puff of air, the useless shutters, and the broken stairs, were not new to Rosa; and when Robert turned and asked her, "Did you ever see anything like it, miss?" she only answered with a shudder.

Robert inquired of a poor woman, at the top of the stairs, for Mrs. Vaughn's room, and was shown up a rickety back-staircase, the old crone muttering as she hobbled on before them,—

"It 's but a narry room the puir crathur 'll be afther havin' whin the sun is doon, an' a deal nigher God's airth than this ould garret, I'm a thinkin'!"

Rosa, though startled, had no time to ask an explanation, for the old woman stopped, and pointing with her staff towards a half-opened door, hobbled back the way she came.

"Hush, Robert!" whispered the child, putting her finger to her lip; and stepping lightly forward, she stood unobserved in the opening. Unobserved—for who was there to observe her? On a miserable couch, spread of straw and rags upon the bare floor, lay the figure of a woman. The cheeks were sunken and the muscles rigid; weights were laid upon the

closed eyes to keep down the lids; the chin was bound up by a folded kerchief; and the white, bony hands lay as they had been placed, their livid tips crossing each other on her still bosom. The mother of poor Ellen Vaughn was dead. Rosa saw it at a glance; and tears filled her eyes, and streamed down over her face, as she noted a touching exhibition of simple-hearted affection. A pale, meagre-looking child was kneeling by the bedside, trying with her trembling little hand to place in the bosom of the dead a single rose which she had just broken from a scraggy, sickly bush beside her. The mother had probably loved that rose-tree, and smiled on the little bud that came like a sweet messenger to cheer her, and watched its opening from day to day with an interest inconceivable to those who have never been walled up in the prison of a noisome, filthy street, in the darkest quarter of a large city. The child, too, had loved it; and she gave all she had to give, when she broke that cherished stem. A little one, still younger, sat on the knee of Ellen Vaughn, playing with her fast falling tears, and looking into her face with curious interest.

"Be's she don to Dod, sissy?" inquired the little prattler; "when will she turn back agin?"

Poor Ellen could not answer; and the unconscious baby-orphan, putting her thin, blue arms about her neck, said, softly, "Don't ki, sissy, don't ki, an' I will tiss 'ou."

The boy, with quivering chin and swollen eyes, stood at the foot of the bed, watching his sister's fond movements about the dead; and when she had finished, and left a kiss on the icy fingers and the sunken cheek, he pressed both hands upon the aching forehead, and with a loud, sob-like burst of agony, turned away, and coiled himself up in the farthest corner of the room.

"We are too late, Robert," whispered Rosa Warner, "go and tell mother."

Robert drew the sleeve of his coat hastily across his eyes, and hurried down the stairs; while Rosa twined her arms with those of the little one on Ellen Vaughn's knee, and

whispered such words as were the first to find their way up from her swelling heart.

When Mrs. Warner reached the house of death, she found the seamstress fast asleep, with her head resting on her daughter's lap, and the three children gathered around Rosa's feet, listening to her words of soothing and encouragement. How changed did Rosa Warner seem within the last three days! How exquisitely had the pencil of sorrow shaded and mellowed down her beauty! So thought the mother, as she gazed upon the little ministering angel; and then a severe pang of remorse shot to her heart as her eye fell upon the hollow, death-like face between her child's soothing hands.

"Poor Ellen is asleep, mamma," whispered Rosa; "she has not closed her eyes for two whole nights, and she is almost worn out with fatigue."

John hastened to bring the only stool the garret could boast; his younger sister, a glow of gratitude lighting up her sad face, exclaimed, "You are *so* good!" and the little one, nestling both of her puny hands in the lady's, looked up into her face, and began telling her that "mammy had don to Dod," never to "tum back agin," but that she would send for all of them one of these days, and then they "should n't be hundry any more — never — never —" so "sissy" said.

Hungry, poor lisper! That the grave should be an infant's hope! Mrs. Warner promised her own heart that their last hour of suffering from hunger had passed; then, taking the prattler in her arms, she called the boy to her side; and, with the most sympathetic delicacy, drew from him revealings that made her heart ache. He told her how they had been happy beyond the sea; how, in an evil hour, his father had sold his little patrimony, and embarked for an unknown land; of a death and burial at sea, that left the little family without a head, desolate, indeed; of a poor woman seeking a home in a strange land, followed by her dependent children; of the daily diminishing of their slender funds; of wakeful eyes and anxious bosoms; of the gradual sinking away of one of their number, and the grave opened for her in the village

church-yard; of toil and sickness, sickness, toil, and tears; then want of work, followed by want of bread; the bitter mockery that men palm off for sympathy; hours minuted by woe; the almost hopeless clinging to hope; of vain, impotent struggles; and finally, the ill-judged removal to the city. The boy stopped there; and Mrs. Warner, glancing around the miserable garret, read all the rest but too plainly. Oh! what sacrifice would not the proud lady have made to be able to live over again the three days since she had first seen Ellen Vaughn! The boy had told her of a previous bereavement, and she now inquired where they had buried his sister. He told her of a pleasant grave-yard on the shore of New Jersey, and of a rose-bush that he had planted, and his mother and Nelly watered and trimmed; "but," exclaimed the boy with a passionate sob, "*she* cannot lie there! They will put my mother in the Potter's-field—they will not leave us even her grave! Oh! that is worst of all!"

Mrs. Warner assured him that his mother should be buried in the spot which he and Ellen should choose; and when Rosa saw the boy's mournful delight, she could scarce forbear waking the sleeper, to whisper the same consolation in her ear. But when Ellen at last did awake, it was not to be consoled. At sight of Mrs. Warner she was at first surprised; then, overcome by shame and remorse, she buried her face in her crossed arms; and finally, springing to her feet impetuously, she would have revealed the whole, but for a whisper from Rosa. "Do not say it before your brother, Ellen."

The girl recoiled; and her limbs gradually failing beneath her, she sank slowly on the foot of the bed, murmuring, "Then you know it all, and the children will know it and despise me. Thank God! my mother is spared this! But who will care for the children?"

"Nobody knows it," whispered Rosa feelingly, "nobody but me; and you must not tell—now, at least."

Mrs. Warner did not wonder that sight of her should so affect the poor seamstress; and she now came forward and spoke kind, pitying words, in those tones which steal so soothingly over the aching heart, and lull the perturbed spirit.

In less than a week, a pleasant room was opened a few doors from Mrs. Warner's, and filled with flowers and choice books, and everything agreeable to a cultivated, simple taste; and this was the home of the orphans. Not that they were paupers, for their busy hands returned an equivalent for all the good they received. The power to use their hands was all that had been given them. John was sent to school four hours in the day, and employed by Mr. Warner the remainder of the time, learning constantly lessons of industry and independence. The sister, who had cherished the rose so fondly, and bestowed it so touchingly, had plenty of roses now; and when not engaged in school, she glided around among the flowers like one of their own sweet selves. The little one talked no more of going to heaven to avoid being "hungry," but still she lisped her broken prayers, kneeling in her sister's lap, and still she prattled to Mrs. Warner of things "sissy" told her, sometimes perverting their meaning ludicrously, and always appearing most enchantingly simple. As for Ellen, she habitually wore a look of sad seriousness far beyond her years; but every day it became more and more mellowed and sweetened, till one could scarce wish it away. It required but few words from Mrs. Warner, to interest several ladies in the young girl's behalf; and from that time she never lacked employment, and consequently never lacked either the necessities, or a moderate share of the luxuries, of life.

And did Ellen Vaughn ever acknowledge how much more miserable she had made herself, than all the troubles, and sorrows, and privations that had been heaped without measure upon the heads of those she loved, could have made her? and was Miss Rosa Warner's little chain of deceptions ever brought to light? Ay, it could not be otherwise; for the seamstress would not leave her miserable garret until the darkest corner of her heart, the darkest leaf of her life, was unfolded to her benefactress. And Mrs. Warner, proud woman as she was, wept, and for the first time spoke of herself, declaring that she had been guilty of a double crime—

the fault was entirely hers. And Rosa! Oh! the pink barége was only a tithe of her rewards, though no one called the gifts heaped upon her by such a name. And how much more attention Mrs. Warner bestowed upon her now! how much she watched every movement, and strove to read every glance! and how she wondered that she had ever considered the little lady so utterly thoughtless! But Rosa Warner *was* thoughtless, even as the morning bird that

“Pours its full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.”

That is, she was thoughtless as far as the head was concerned; but her little heart was brimming over with heavenly wisdom—a wisdom made up of love and joy.

TO MY SISTER IN HEAVEN.

My sister, when the evening wanes,
 And midnight hours creep on ;
 When hushed is every earthly sound,
 And all my cares are gone ;

'T is then, into my quiet room
 Thou comest as of yore ;
 And close I seat me at thy side,
 Where oft I 've sat before.

Then I am not as in the day,
 But grow again a child,
 Simple and loving, as when first
 Thy lips upon me smiled.

There, with thine arm about my waist,
 Thy fingers on my brow—
 Those long, thin fingers, parting back
 The clustering hair—and thou

Pale as the unsunned violet,
 Which opens by the rill ;
 I sit and gaze into thine eyes,
 Deep, dark, and loving, still.

And then I hear thy soft low voice,
 Which always touched my heart ;
 And weep because thou tellest me
 How near to heaven thou art.

And still thou speak'st of angel ones,
 That bow before the throne ;
 And say'st the little one thou 'st loved
 Shall ne'er be left alone

But when, an angel too, thou hast
Thy robes of glory on,
Thou 'lt hover round her pillowed rest,
Till morning light shall dawn ;

And ever, through life's mazy way,
Thou 'lt guide her wayward feet ;
And be the first her spirit freed
In yonder home to greet.

And, sister mine, I 've felt thy care
In danger o'er me thrown ;
And when cold hearts were gathering near,
I have not been alone.

Long years have wheeled their weary round,
Since dark and deep they laid
Thy coffined form, and heaped the earth,
And bowed their heads and prayed ;

Then turned away and talked of spring
And of the sunny day ;
As though the earth *could* smile again,
When thou hadst passed away !

And since, I 've trod a thorny path,
Of loneliness and pain ;
Of clouded skies, and blighted flowers,
And coldness, and disdain.

I 've drunk from out a bitter cup ;
With care and grief have striven ;
But then, the rustle of thy wing
Has brought me near to heaven.

Then come, my angel-one, to-night ;
My heart is full of gloom ;
Come with thy quiet step and smile,
And seat thee in my room.

And clasp, me, sister, in thine arms,
And hold me to thy breast ;
For by the thronging cares of earth
I'm wearied and oppressed.

And let me close my aching lids,
And sleep upon that arm,
Which used to seem enough to me
To shelter from all harm.

I'm weary now, I'm weary now !
I fain would be at rest !
Yet closer twine thine angel arms,
And fold me to thy breast.

ALLY FISHER.

STUDY, study, study !

Trudge, trudge, trudge !

Sew, sew, sew !

Oh, what a humdrum life was that of little Ally Fisher ! Day in, day out, late and early, from week's end to week's end, it was all the same. Oh, how Ally's feet and head and hands ached ! and sometimes her heart ached, too — poor child !

Ally was not an interesting little girl ; she had no time to be interesting. Her voice, true, was very sweet, but *so* plaintive ! Beside, you seldom heard it ; for little Ally Fisher's thoughts were so constantly occupied, that it was seldom they found time to come up to her lips. No, Ally was not interesting. She had never given out the silvery, care-free, heart-laugh which we love so to hear from children : she could not laugh ; for, though sent to earth, a disguised ministering angel, vice had arisen between her and all life's brightness, and clouded in her sun. And how can anything be interesting on which the shadow of vice rests ? Instead of mirth, Ally had given her young spirit to sorrow ; instead of the bright flowers springing up in the pathway of blissful childhood, the swelling, bursting buds of Hope that make our spring days so gay, Ally looked out upon a desert with but one oasis. Oh, how dear was that bright spot, with its flowers all fadeless, its waters sparkling, never-failing, living, its harps, its crowns, its sainted ones, its white-winged throng, its King ! The King of Heaven ! — that kind Saviour who loved her, who watched over her in her helplessness, who counted all her tears, lightened all her burdens, and was waiting to take her in his arms and shelter her forever in his bosom. Little Ally Fisher had indeed one pure, precious source of happi-

ness; and that was why the grave did not open beneath her childish feet, and she go down into it for rest, worn out by her burden of sorrow, want and misery. Yet Ally was not interesting. When other children were out playing among the quivering, joyful summer shadows, she sat away behind her desk in the school-room, sew, sew, sewing, till her eyes ached away back into her head, and her little arm felt as though it must drop from the thin shoulder. "Odd ways these for a child! How disagreeably mature! It is a very unpleasant thing to see children make old women of themselves!" Ah, then, woe to the sin—woe to the sinner who cheats a young heart of its spring!

Neither was Ally beautiful;—her face was *so* thin and want-pinched, and her great eyes looked so wobegone! How *could* Ally be beautiful, with such a load of care upon her, crushing beneath its iron weight the rich jewels which God had lavished upon her spirit? It is the inner beauty that shines upon the face,—and all the flowers of her young heart had been blasted. Her curls were glossy enough, but you could not help believing, when you looked upon them, that misery nestled in their deep shadows; her eyes were of the softest, meekest brown, fringed with rich sable, but *so* full of misery! Her complexion was transparently fair, with a tinge of blue, instead of the warm, generous heart-tide which belongs to childhood and youth; all her features were pinched and attenuated; her hands were small, and thin, and blue; and her little figure, in its scanty, homely clothing, looked very much like a weed which has stood too long in the autumn time. So frail! so delicate! so desolate!

And did anybody love little Ally Fisher? the busy bee—the hum-drum worker—the forlorn child who was neither interesting nor beautiful? Was there anybody to love her? No one but her mother—a poor, sad looking woman, who wore a faded green bonnet and a patched chintz frock, and never stopped to smile or shake hands with anybody, when she walked out of the village church. This desolate, sad-hearted woman, with her bony figure and sharpened face—

this Dame Fisher, whom the boys called a scare-crow, and the girls used to imitate in tableaux—this strange woman, seeming in her visible wretchedness scarce to belong to this bright, beautiful world, bore a measureless, exhaustless fountain of love behind the faded garments and the ugly person ; and she lavished all its holy wealth on poor little Ally. Ally had a father, too ; but he did not love her. He loved nothing but the vile grog-shop at the corner of the street, and the brown earthen jug which he yet had humanity or shame enough to hide away in the loft. Ah, now you see why Ally Fisher was unhappy ! Now you see the vice in whose shadow the stricken child matured so rapidly ! Now you are ready to exclaim with me, "Poor, poor Ally Fisher ! God help her !"

Ay, God help her !

Ally tried very hard to help herself ; but her mother was always very feeble, and there were several little ones younger than herself. What could poor Ally do ? She went to school—that she *would* do, because she never could accomplish anything at home in that small, crowded room, with all those thin-faced, miserable little creatures about her ; but she took her sewing with her, and every moment that she could steal from her books was devoted to earning bread.

Dame Fisher had looked earnestly forward to the time when Ally would be old enough and learned enough to vary the monotonous character of her employment, and preside in the capacity of teacher over the little school just over the hill. These mothers are so dotingly hopeful ! How could she think of it, and Ally the child of a drunkard ? To be sure, this was the only vice of which Billy Fisher had ever been guilty. He had never defrauded his neighbor ; he had never, in better days, when some who now despised him were in his power, been oppressive to the poor ; he had harmed no one, nor wished harm to any ; he had only degraded his own nature almost to a bestial level, and poured out a vessel of shame upon his family. Enough, to be sure ; but then Ally—she had always been a gentle, patient, toiling, faultless

child, and why must she suffer for her father's sin? What! the daughter of the drunken vagabond, Billy Fisher, a teacher for *their* children! What a presuming minx she must be! The idea was preposterous! She must find other means of supplying herself with the finery she was prinking in of late; let her go into the kitchen where she belonged! Poor Ally! she had wrought till midnight for a fortnight, to prepare herself for presentation to these same fault-finders; and if she had not, they would have called her *ragamuffin*. Where *shall* we look for a reasonable man?

Ally was not much distressed. To be sure, it was the breaking up of a long cherished dream, and the severer that this had been the only dream she had ever dared cherish; but the poor girl had a holy resource, and she did not repine. She went from the door where the one hope of her life had been cruelly crushed, with a swelling heart and faltering step. Over the stile across the way, the little blue eyes of the spring-violets were looking up lovingly from beds of moss; the freed streams were dancing gaily, flashing and sparkling in the sunlight; and on a brown maple bough, where leaf-buds were swelling ready to burst with life, a little bird, the first spring-bird, carolled as blithely as though it might thus bring Eden to a desolate, disappointed, sorrowing heart. Ally Fisher heard it, and the tears broke over their fringed boundaries and fell in a sparkling shower upon her boddice. Then she crossed the stile, and the stream, and passed the trees, till she found a solitary nook away in the heart of the wood; and there she knelt and prayed. How strong was Ally Fisher when she left her retreat! The arm of Him who is almighty was about her.

Ally Fisher passed with quite as light a foot as usual over the dried leaves through which the tender spring-blades were peeping, and beyond the border of the wood, till she came within sight of one of our beautiful central lakes on the border of which the young green was striving with the pallid spoils of last year's frost. Ally Fisher was not very observing—she was too thoughtful to be observing; but as she emerged

from the wood she saw a person, probably a nurse, walking near the lake with a little girl, who danced, and prattled, and clapped her tiny hands, now bounding from the path, now half hiding her little head in the woman's dress, and then running forward with all the guileless glee of a bird or butterfly. Ally looked at her, and felt the warm tears creeping to her eyes. Why had *she* never been thus happy? And why should that terrible shadow which had rested on her cradle, darken at this point, so full of strange, wondrous interest, now when she was

"Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet.

Gazing, with a timid glance,
On the brooklet's swift advance,
On the river's broad expanse."

The tears crept to Ally's eyes; but they had no time to fall. She heard a shriek, and saw the woman cowering over the verge of the lake, her hands clasped as though in an ecstasy of agonized fear.

"The child!" thought Ally, as she sprang forward, new life in every limb and lighting up her eye. She was right. The little one was just rising to the surface after her first terrible plunge; Ally caught a glimpse of a pale, agonized face, then a fold of scarlet; and then all disappeared except the successive rings formed by the rippling water. "It is not deep, not very deep," she said, half to herself, half to the careless nurse, "if I were only taller!" She stepped into the water carefully, as though to insure in the outset a firm footing. Another step, and the water grew deeper—another—another—the water had arisen above her waist, and her slight figure seemed swayed by its undulations. Dare she go farther? Oh, the lake was so still—only a ripple on its surface; and a life—a *life* at stake! Again on, one more step—the little scarlet dress appeared just before her. But one short step more!—she falters, reels—ah, she grasps it!—now Ally! see, she pauses deliberately to steady her-

self! Her presence of mind, even in the moment of triumph, has not forsaken her, and her foot is still firm. She returns slowly, safely to the shore; and sinks, with her recovered human treasure at the feet of the terrified nurse.

Ally Fisher opened her large, wandering eyes upon a strange scene. Her head lay upon a pillow of rich purple velvet; and she turned from her singular couch to magnificent folds of drapery; heavy golden cords half hidden in their soft shadows; rich, massive furniture, the use of which she did not understand — all the wonders of this magic palace — quite unheeding a kind face which bent anxiously over her.

“Oh, I was so careless, and you so good!” was the first exclamation she heard; and then from a sofa at the other side of the room came a pale, beautiful lady and whispered, “Dear child! God bless her!” in low, tremulous tones, as though the terror had not yet gone from her heart.

“Does she recover?” inquired another voice. It was that of a man; and, though strong, there was now a subdued tremor in it, which gave evidence that the string on which it vibrated had been lately jarred by fear and sorrow. “Does she recover? This noble deed has made her ours as Marcia is. She shall never go back to that poor hovel again.”

“My mother!” was Ally’s answering exclamation. “Oh, she will be so frightened! I must go to my mother now.” It was in vain that the lady and her husband, and even the attending physician insisted on her remaining, at least until she was quite recovered; and offered to send for her mother. Ally arose to her feet and smiled her usual sad smile.

“I am well, quite well. It didn’t hurt me any; I was only frightened because I thought the poor little girl was dead. To be sure, I should n’t fear the dead, but when I had her in my arms — Are you sure she will get well?”

“She will; and it was you who saved her life.”

Ally shuddered. “Uh! her cheek was so cold! just like little Willie’s. But you say she will get well, and I am very glad; though sometimes I think it would be a pleasant thing

to die and go to heaven where Jesus Christ is. — It is *so* dreary here !” she added in a pitiful tone and half musingly.

Dame Fisher was surprised to see the family carriage of the Burnells draw up at her humble door, and more still surprised when her own Ally, all in strange garb “a world too wide,” sprang from it, her pale face really brilliant with excitement. Ally’s large eyes were larger than ever, and the heart’s light was centred beneath their jetty fringes ; while her mouth, the lips no longer pale, was wreathed with unusual smiles.

“ Oh, mother ! I have saved a life ! Is not God kind to let me do so great a thing ? ”

Strange that neither Ally nor her mother thought of the lost school that night, heavy as the disappointment was ! Nay, *is* it strange ? They thought of it in the morning, however, and then dame Fisher was much sadder than Ally was.

“ So you are to sew your life away,” she said despondingly ; “ my poor, poor Ally ! ”

“ No, mother ; God will take care of me.”

It was not noon when the family carriage of the Burnells again appeared at the door of Billy Fisher’s miserable cottage.

“ Mrs. Burnell. It may be, Ally, she will get you the school — these rich people have so much influence.”

Mrs. Burnell came to offer Ally, as her husband had promised in his first lively emotion of gratitude, a splendid home.

“ You shall share with little Marcia in everything,” she said. “ You shall even divide our love. More, you are older, and you shall be considered in everything the elder daughter. Come and live with us, dear ; for we should have had no child but for you.”

Ally looked at her mother, whose thin face now glowed with gratified ambition ; glanced at the broken walls of the miserable hovel she called home ; turned from one little half-starved figure to another ; and then, approaching the lady, said in a low, firm tone, “ You are very kind, and I will pray God to bless you for it ; but I must not go away from here ! ”

"Must not!"

"Must not, Ally!" exclaimed the surprised, disappointed mother.

Ally's voice became choked. "This is a very poor place — I never knew how poor until I went into some of the grand houses ; but I have always lived in it, and —"

"But the sewing, and that terrible pain in your side, dear!" interrupted the matron.

"It will be better soon, I think ; and may be I shall not have to sew as much now Mary is getting bigger."

"But, Ally —"

"Mother, don't drive me away from home."

"We will give you a home," pleaded the lady, "the home you saw yesterday. There you shall have everything you can wish ; things much more beautiful than you have ever seen in your life ; and little Marcia, whose life you saved, will love you, and so will we all."

"Then who will love my poor, poor mother?" And Ally burst into tears.

At the commencement of the conference a head had been raised from a pile of bed-covering in a corner of the room, and a red, bloated face looked out on the group with vague wonder. Soon an expression of intelligence began to lighten up the heavy eyes, and now and then a trace of something like emotion appeared upon the face. At Ally's last words there was for a moment a strange, convulsive working of the features, and the head fell heavily back upon the pillow.

It was in vain that both the lady and dame Fisher pleaded. Ally's firm, modest answer was ever the same. "Oh, it was nothing ; I could n't let the little girl drown, when it was so easy to go into the water. It was nothing ; so I do not deserve that beautiful home. I should n't be of any use there either, and here I am needed."

"But I will give you five times the money you could earn by sewing," urged the lady, "and you shall bring it all here."

Ally was for a moment staggered.

"So you would help us more by going than by staying,"

added the dame, quite forgetful of self while so anxious for her child's welfare.

"But mother, who would hold your head when it aches, and bathe your temples, and kiss away the pain, and then sit and watch you while you sleep? And when the trouble comes, who would try to make it light, and help you find all the happy things to weigh against it? And who would sit with you at evening when you are so lonely? Who, mother, would read this Bible to you? For you told me but yesterday that your eyes were failing; and who would—would love you, mother? Oh, don't send me away! All those beautiful things would only make me sorry if you could not have them too; and so you must let me stay here in the old house; for it is the only place where I can be happy. God would not love me if I were to leave you with all the children to care for, and none to comfort you when you are sad."

The lady's eyes were quite suffused with the heart's-dew, as, with a mental blessing on the young girl's head, and a silent determination to reward her self-denying spirit richly, she turned away.

"You have sacrificed yourself for my sake, Ally," sobbed the dame, folding her gentle child in her arms; "Oh, why did you do it?"

"No, mother, I am happier here, and he ——" Ally pointed to the bed meaningly. "I could n't mention it before her."

"Yes, darling, you are right, as you always are; he would kill himself without you in a week, I know. But, oh, it is a dreadful thing—my poor, poor Ally!"

Ally was at her sewing, as calm and quiet as though nothing unusual had occurred, though there was a singularly bright spot on her cheek; and the dame had busied herself with preparing the children's supper, when Billy Fisher crept from the bed, and glided half-timidly to the door.

"Don't go to-night, father," whispered Ally, laying her slight hand on his, and fixing her large, mournful eyes on his face most feelingly. "Don't go; I will help you fix the

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As I said before, Edith Ray feared nothing but to do wrong; and her daring had been so much the subject of remark, that she felt some pride in exhibiting her courage; a quality which her young friends took every opportunity to test. Unknown to her companions, however, there was one point on which Edith was vulnerable; she had, when a little child, seen her own mother stretched out in death—she remembered the rigid limbs, with their white covering, giving a fearful mystery to their half-revealed outlines—and anything that bore the slightest resemblance to such a form, inspired her with horror.

It was on a fine moonlight night in midwinter, that a social group had assembled in Mr. Ray's parlor; and Edith, unlike her wont when Mr. Robson was present, had been the gayest of the party. As the evening drew to a close, Mr. Sherrill expressed a wish to see a book of engravings that had disappeared from the parlor; a desire which Edith declared such an evidence of improved taste, that it should be instantly gratified. She tripped lightly from the room; and as she disappeared we all observed that Sherrill crept carefully toward the door. The next moment a short, shrill cry, followed by a low, half-choked sound, as of one strangling, brought us to our feet. With one bound poor Sherrill was in the adjoining apartment; but he was scarce in advance of the young pastor. The rest of us followed hastily, alarmed at, we knew not what. But we soon knew. Upon a long table lay extended an object covered with a white cloth, with the moonbeams flickering over it, revealing the fearful outlines of a human figure with apparent certainty. Before this crouched young Edith Ray, with her fingers clenched in the masses of long hair descending on each side of her face, her eyes distended, and a white foam wreathing her motionless lips.

"Edith! my own Edith!" whispered Robson, in a voice hoarse with agony.

Edith started to her feet, and the mocking walls echoed her wild unnatural laugh.

"Look, Edith — look!" entreated Sherrill; "it is nothing;" and he shook out two or three cloaks artfully arranged. "Nothing but these — I did it, Edith — I did it — I put them there to scare you!"

Edith only laughed again.

Mr. Robson drew her arm within his own, and led her quietly back into the parlor; and poor Sherrill followed and crouched at her feet, beseeching her but to speak one word, only one word just to show that he had not murdered her. But the stricken girl only twined her hair helplessly about her fingers, and smiled.

Three years have rolled away, but they have wrought no change on the darkened spirit of Edith Ray. Mr. Robson still occupies the parsonage, but he has grown graver, and gentler, and more spiritual than ever; and the young repress their smiles and soften their voices when he comes near; for untold sorrow is a sacred thing. The neighbors say that Parson Robson is wholly devoted to his books, and the care of his flock. But they make a marvel of one thing. It is a great wonder to them what is the attraction at poor Mr. Ray's, that he should spend his two hours there every evening. They never saw the stricken Edith at his feet, gazing up into his face with an expression of childish confidence; nor heard her low, mournful murmur when he went away. Our young pastor is ever found among the sick and sorrowing; but every effort to draw him into social life fails; for the poor wreck, which clings to him even in her idiocy, is still borne upon his heart.

KITTY COLEMAN.

AN arrant piece of mischief was that Kitty Coleman, with her winsome ways and wicked little heart! Those large, bewildering eyes! how they poured out their strange eloquence, looking as innocent all the while as though they had peeped from their amber-fringed curtains quite by mistake, or only to join in a quadrille with the sunlight! And then those warm, ripe lips! the veritable

“rosy bed,
That a bee would choose to dream in.”

That is, a well-bred bee, which cared to pillow his head on pearls white as snow, on the heaven-side of our earthly atmosphere, and sip the honey of Hybla from the balmy air fanning his slumbers. And so wild and unmanageable was she! Oh! it was shocking to “*proper* people!” Why, she actually laughed aloud—Kitty Coleman did! I say Kitty, because in her hours of frolicking, she was very like a juvenile puss, particularly given to fun-loving: and, moreover, because everybody called her Kitty, but aunt Martha. She was a well-bred woman, who disapproved of loud laughing, romping, and nicknaming, as she did of other crimes; so she always said, Miss Catharine. People always have their trials in this world, and Kitty Coleman (so she firmly believed) would have been perfectly happy but for aunt Martha. She thought, even, that Miss Catharine’s hair—those long, golden locks, like rays of floating sunshine wandering about her shoulders, should be gathered up into a comb; and once the little lady was so obliging as to make a trial of the scheme; but, at the first bound she made after Rover, the burnished cloud broke from its ignoble bondage, and the little silver comb nestled down in the long grass forever more. Kitty *was* a sad romp.

It is a hard thing to say of one we all loved so well, but aunt Martha said it, and shook her head, and sighed the while; and the squire, aunt Martha's brother, said it, and spread open his arms for his pet to spring into; and careful old ladies said it, and said, too, what a pity it is that young ladies now-a-days should have no more regard for propriety! and even Enoch Short, the great phrenologist, buried his bony fingers in those dainty locks, that none but a phrenologist had a right to touch; and, waiting only for the long, silvery laugh, that interrupted his scientific researches, to subside, declared that her organ of mirthfulness was very strikingly developed. It was then a matter past controversy; and, of course, Kitty was expected to do what nobody else could do, and say what nobody else had a right to say; and the sin of all was chargeable to a strange idiosyncrasy, a peculiar conformation of the mind, or rather brain, over which she had no control; and so Kitty was forgiven, forgiven by all but — we had a story to tell.

I have heard that Cupid is blind, but of that I believe not a word. Indeed, I have confirmation strong, that the malicious little knave has a sort of *clairvoyance*, and can see a heart where few would expect one to exist; for, did he not perch himself, now in the eye, and now on the lip of Kitty Coleman, and, with a marvellously steady aim, (imitating a personage a trifle more dreaded,)

“cut down all,
Both great and small?”

Blind! no, no! If the laughing rogue did fail in a single instance, it was not that he aimed falsely, or had emptied his quiver before. Harry Raymond must have had a tough heart, and so the arrow rebounded! Oh! a very stupid fellow was that Harry Raymond, and Kitty hesitated not to say it; for, after walking and riding with her all through the leafy month of June, what right had he to grow dignified all of a sudden, and look upon her, when he did at all, as though she had been a naughty child that deserved tying up? To be sure, Harry Raymond was a scholar, and in love, (as everybody

said,) with his books ; but pray, what book is there of them all, that could begin to compare with Kitty Coleman ?

There used to be delightful little gatherings in our village, and Kitty must of course be there ; and Harry, stupid as he was, always went too. People were of course glad to see him, for the honor was something, if the company had otherwise been ever so undesirable. But Kitty hesitated not to show her dislike. She declared he did not know how to be civil ; and then she sighed, (doubtlessly at the boorishness of scholars in general, and this one in particular,) then she laughed, so long and musically, that the lawyer, the school-master, the four clerks, the merchant, and Lithper Lithpet, the dandy, all joined in the chorus ; though not one of them could have told what the lady laughed at. Harry Raymond only looked towards the group, muttered something in a very ill-natured tone about butterflies, and then turned his back upon them and gazed out of the window, though it was very certain he could see nothing in the pitchy darkness. It was very strange that Kitty Coleman should have disregarded entirely the opinion of such a distinguished gentleman as Harry Raymond ; for he had travelled, and he sported an elegant wardrobe, and owned a gay equipage, a fine house and grounds, "and everything that was handsome." But she only laughed the louder when she saw that he was displeased. Indeed, his serious face seemed to infuse the concentrated, double-distilled spirit of mirthfulness into her ; and a more frolicksome creature never existed than Kitty was—until he was gone. Then, all of a sudden, she grew fatigued, and must go home immediately.

Ah, Kitty ! Kitty ! thine hour had come ; and thou wert learning now what wiser ones had long been endeavoring to teach thee—that thy mirth was but "as the crackling of thorns under a pot," soulless.

It was as much on Harry Raymond's account as her own, that aunt Martha was distressed at the hoydenish manners of her romping niece. But Kitty insisted that her manners were not hoydenish, and that if her heart overflowed, it was not her fault.

She could not shut up all her glad feelings within her ; they would leap back at the call of their kindred gushing from other bosoms, and to all the beautiful things of creation as joyous in their mute eloquence as she was. Besides, the wicked little Kitty Coleman was very angry that aunt Martha should attempt to govern her conduct by the likings of Harry Raymond ; and, to show that she did not care an apple-blossom for him, nor his opinions either, she was more unreasonably gay in his presence than anywhere else. But, whatever Harry Raymond might think, he did not slander the little lady. Indeed, he never was heard to speak of her but once, and then he said she had no soul. A pretty judge of soul, he, to be sure ! a man without a smile ! How can people who go through the world, cold and still, like the clods they tread upon, pretend to know anything about soul ?

But, notwithstanding the enmity of the young people, Harry Raymond used to go to Squire Coleman's, and talk all the evening with the squire and aunt Martha, while his big, black eyes turned slowly in the direction Kitty moved, like the bewitching sylphide that she was ; but Kitty did not look at him, not she ! What right had a stranger, and her father's guest too, to act out his reproof in such a manner ?

When Harry went away, he would bow easily and gracefully to the old people, but to the young lady he found it difficult to bend. Conduct like this provoked Kitty Coleman beyond endurance ; and, one evening after the squire and spinster had left her alone, she sat down, and in very spite sobbed away as though her little heart would break. Now it happened that the squire had lent his visiter a book that evening, which, strange enough for such a scholar, he had forgotten to take with him ; but luckily Harry remembered it before it was too late, and turned upon his heel. The door was open, and so he stepped at once into the parlor. Poor Kitty sprang to her feet at the intrusion, and crushed with her fingers two tears that were just ready to launch themselves on the roundest and rosiest cheek in the world ; but she might have done better than blind herself, for, by some means, her foot came in un-

intentional contact with aunt Martha's rocking-chair, and her forehead, in consequence, found itself resting very unceremoniously on the neck of Rover. It is very awkward to be surprised in the luxurious *abandon* of tears at any time; and it is a trifle more awkward still to stumble when you wish to be particularly dignified, and then be raised by the last person in the world from whom you would receive a favor. Kitty felt the awkwardness of her position too much to speak, and of course Harry could not release her until he knew whether she was hurt. It was certain she was not faint, for the crimson blood dyed even the tips of her fingers, and Harry's face immediately took the same hue, probably from sympathy. Kitty looked down until a golden arc of fringe rested lovingly on its glowing neighbor; and Harry, too, looked down on Kitty Coleman's face. Then came a low, soft whisper—low and soft as the breathing of an infant; and (poor Kitty *must* have been hurt and needed support) an arm stole softly around her waist, and dark locks mingled with her sunny ones, and Kitty Coleman hid her face—*not* in her hands.

Empty gayety had failed to win the heart of Harry Raymond; but the tears were triumphant.

Harry forgot his book again that night, and never thought of it till the squire put it into his hand the next morning; for Harry visited the squire very early the next morning. Very likely he came on business, for they had a private interview; and the good old gentleman slapped him on the shoulder, and said, "with all my heart;" and aunt Martha looked as glad as propriety would let her. As for Kitty Coleman, she did not show her face, not she; for she knew they were talking about her—*such* a meddler was Harry Raymond! But, as the arrant mischief-maker bounded from the door, there was a great rustling among the rose-bushes, insomuch that a shower of bright blossoms descended from them, and reddened the dewy turf; and Harry turned a face brimming over with joyfulness to the fragrant thicket, and went to search out the cause of the disturbance.

Now it happened that Kitty Coleman had hidden in this

very thicket, and she was, of course, found out ; and—I do not think that poor Kitty ever quite recovered from the effects of her fall, for the arm of Harry Raymond seemed very necessary to her forever after.

The mirth and mischief?

Oh, they vanished with the falsehood which supported their semblance, when the first dawnings of love made the heart serious ; for love and happiness always fling the weight of *feeling* upon gayety, smothering its vain sparkles. The rich draught is never in the foam and bubbles that dance upon the brim. The *heart* never *laughs* ; but the deeper the sunshine that blesses it, the less it looks to outer things for blessings ; and so the world never prizes its light. The gay may *have* hearts, but they have never learned to use them—never learned to think, to feel, to love. Who will may imitate Kitty Coleman and the butterflies ; but there are those who are wiser, and love better the sweet seriousness beaming like the mellow August moon-ray above hidden heart-treasures.

ROBERT FLEMMING;

A VERITABLE TALE, SHOWING

"WHAT THAT BOY DID COME TO AT LAST."

"RACHEL," said a young farmer to his wife, as he entered the house, leading by the hand a curly-headed little fellow, with a particularly bright eye and a mouth with a particularly roguish curl to it—"Rachel, you were wishing yesterday you had a boy; I have brought one home to you."

The young woman dropped the broom which she was wielding with much spirit, and turning short round, placed her two bared arms akimbo. "Well, Eben Howe, you are just the strangest man that I ever saw. What *do* you suppose I can do with a boy, when I have everything under the sun to do, and nobody to help?"

"Why, it is to help you that I have brought him home, Rachel."

"Help! yes, I'll warrant me, such help as I get from everybody that comes into this house. You brought grand-mamma to help me, too, I suppose, and——"

"Rachel!" exclaimed the young man, in a tone of sorrowful surprise.

"Not that I mind the trouble with her," resumed the wife, not much abashed; "there's nothing that I like better than waiting on grandmamma; but you've no idea, Eben, of the wear and tear of the slavish life I lead. Here's the baby has done nothing but cry all day long——"

"Well, well, Rachel; never mind——"

"Never mind! Oh, yes, that's always the way. If I should kill myself, you'd say 'never mind!'"

"I mean don't mind anything about the boy. I got him to assist you; but if you think he would make trouble——"

"Make trouble, Eben? Why, I would rather do every

chore myself than have the trouble of following after a boy, watching to see that things were done right, and slaving myself to death to do his washing and mending."

"Very well, Rachel, I can take him back to-morrow, when I go to carry the wool to Smith's. I wish we could contrive some way of lightening your cares, though. If you would only consent to hire a girl——"

"Hire! No—no; I'm not the lazy woman you take me for, Eben Howe. Hire, indeed! Why, I should have the whole neighborhood laughing at me, as they do at that shiftless Mrs. Wood. No; I'll work my fingers off up to the joints, before I'll have it said that Rachel Ellis set up for a lady as soon as she got married, and ruined her husband by her extravagance."

"Nobody would say that, Rachel. But supposing we adopt a little girl, would she make as much trouble as a boy?"

"A thousand times more. I would n't bring up a girl for the world."

Mr. Howe glanced at the cradle.

"One not my own, I mean. A girl could n't cut wood and take care of the cattle when you were gone."

"And a boy could."

"Yes; and—he could look after the baby."

"Certainly."

"And help scrub floor."

"Of course."

"And run of all sorts of errands."

"And bring water from the spring."

"And—and—oh, a boy could do a great deal. Then I could alter over your old clothes for him, and we never have a scant table; so the keeping would n't be much."

"A mere trifle. But consider the trouble to yourself, Rachel."

"Why, as to that, I am pretty strong yet, and should n't mind a little more work, if the boy was faithful and willing. I hope he did n't come from a poor, miserable hut, like the

Murphys ; we never could break him of his bad habits, if he did."

"The boy ~~has~~ been well taught, I am certain, Rachel. If he had bad habits, he would be unlike——"

Howe hesitated to say whom, and his wife, without noting it, inquired—"What kind of a bargain have you made, Eben?"

"If we conclude it is best, we can have him three months on trial——"

"Three months, and haying and harvesting all over ! Why, a baby could do all the chores we shall have to do."

"Oh, that is of no great consequence——"

"I tell you, Eben Howe, it is of a great deal of consequence when you take any one on trial, that there should be plenty of work to do, and that of the right kind."

"Yes—yes, I know it, Rachel ; but if three months don't satisfy us, I presume we can try him a year ; we can keep him as long as we please, and send him away when we please. Poor woman ! she has not the power to choose," he added, in an under tone.

"Ah, that is something like. What then?"

"Why, if we finally conclude to keep him, we are to consider him as our own boy, treat him well——"

"I hope we are not the folks to treat him ill."

"I am sure *you* will not, Rachel. Then we are to feed and clothe him only——"

"Only ! I guess you'd not say *only*, if you knew what that would be. He'll wear out clothes faster than I can make them, I'll warrant, and eat as much as a man."

"So you think it will be very expensive to keep him?"

"No, not expensive exactly—no, not at all. I told you that I could manage the clothing part nicely, and one mouth in a family where there's always plenty don't make much difference."

"But the trouble to you?"

"Oh, I should n't mind it much. I suppose we can keep him till he's twenty-one?"

"Yes, if he is bound."

"Well, we won't have him bound. I would n't have a bound-boy about the house. He shall be free to go any minute he chooses; though, to be sure, if he prove to be a good boy, we will keep him to bring up, and do well by him, won't we, Eben?"

"That can be decided hereafter; but there's one more item in the bargain. We are to send him to school three months every year."

"To school, indeed! And where's the money to come from, and the—and the—? Now, Eben Howe, *can* you think of doing such a foolish thing as that? Three months every year! A quarter of the time idled away, books torn and money spent, and all for nothing but to keep a lazy, good-for-nothing boy away from his work!"

"I should n't like to have any one about my house that could n't read."

"Mercy me, I hope not—that could n't read the Bible! We are not quite such heathen yet. But do tell what's the use of so *much* schooling?"

"It is no more than I hope all American boys, however poor, will be able to receive, Rachel. Education, you know the lecturer told us last evening, is the 'freeman's birthright.' What say you, Rachel; shall we keep him?"

"Well, I don't know as we shall do any better. Have you had your supper, boy?"

During this long dialogue, the little fellow, now for the first time addressed, had stood digging with his bare toes into a crack between the boards of the floor, his roguish black eye fixed upon a sleepy dog that lay stretched in the corner, and his fore-finger very intent on poking itself through the braids of his straw hat. Thus called upon, however, he turned his little round face for the first time upon Mrs. Howe, and while his cherry cheek became purple, and his plump, pouting lips rolled back still farther, very deliberately answered, "I guess I shan't stay here; I don't like to be scolded at."

"Robert!" exclaimed Mr. Howe, in alarm—"Robert!"

"Well taught, indeed!" began his wife, in an angry tone
"Well — well, Eben Howe ——"

"My name is n't 'Well Eben Howe,'" said the little fellow, straightening himself up and drawing down the corners of his mouth, as though he had received a great insult, "my name is Robert Flemming!"

"Robert Flemming, eh?" laughed Mrs. Howe, excited to mirth, in spite of herself, by the look of offended dignity which accompanied the boy's disclaimer. "*Master* Robert Flemming, I suppose we must call you, and ——. Bless me, the child is eating up his own hat! Ha, ha!"

The boy looked up into the face of the speaker, as though unable to comprehend such a singular character, then, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, joined his clear, silvery voice with hers in a very merry laugh; and springing forward, laid his curly head on the neck of the dog, and a moment after, was rolling over the floor, engaged in a rare frolic with his new companion. The baby, as a child nearly a year old was called, hearing the racket, raised its little night-capped head from the cradle, and clapped together its dimpled hands, and crowed with infinite delight; while grandmamma, crippled by age and rheumatism, hobbled forward and stood in the doorway, joining, with her cracked, hollow voice, in the general expression of mirth. Mr. Howe, too, laughed, amused at the turn affairs had taken no less than by the gambols of the boy and dog, till at last recollecting himself, he called Jowler away, and patting Robert affectionately on the head, bade him bring his bundle from the cart and stow it away in the loft, which was to be his sleeping-place.

Robert Flemming was a beautiful boy (if health and happiness can shed beauty on a face made up of rather irregular features) of eight, possessed of his full share of animal spirits, his young head overshadowed by the clouds of an unusually dark fortune, but with a heart that bounded as lightly in his bosom as ever heart could bound. His mother was a delicate young creature, that had been made a wife before she was capable of comprehending the duties and responsibilities of

the station ; and now her loving heart was well nigh crushed beneath the weight of her many cares, and she labored and wept from morning till night, and all night long upon her pillow strained her aching head with visionary projects that the coming light was sure to dissipate. The father of little Robert was one of those who, perhaps as often as better men, lead to the altar the gentle and pure-hearted, — a man of gross appetites and feelings, devoid of that refinement which nature herself grants most of her children, a slave to his passions and a hopeless drunkard.

Ebenezer Howe had known Mrs. Flemming in the days of childhood, and his own benevolent heart induced him to relieve her of her heaviest burthen, the care of a bold-spirited boy, who would soon be grown beyond her influence. Yet the poor mother, notwithstanding her own destitute circumstances, had stipulated for the usual privileges allowed a boy in his situation, and gained a promise that his education should not be neglected. "For," said she, "he is a wild boy and a careless boy, though a better heart never beat ; but I don't know what the poor little fellow will come to at last. I have taught him to read, myself, while I sat sewing for bread ; and I would work still harder and send him to school, rather than to have him grow up in ignorance."

Mr. Howe too well understood his wife's foibles to make known to her the true reason of his taking a boy to "bring up ;" and so he treated it as a matter of interest and convenience merely, trusting that the child himself would soon enlist her better feelings in his welfare. Mrs. Howe was not an unkind woman as far as action was concerned, but she owned a tongue that was incorrigible. Never human being was so difficult to please if the fault-finding were left to herself ; and yet she was a wonderful adept at smoothing away difficulties and removing even her own objections to a plan when she heard them from the lips of another. Her benevolence, which was oftentimes real and heartfelt, was subject to the whimsical variations of her fitful nature ; for she was always capricious and sometimes unreasonably exacting. But

of all good housewives Mrs. Howe was the very best. Her table linen was as white as the driven snow, and her table — oh, it would have gladdened any stomach not perverted by French cookery to look upon it. Then her floors (she would n't have such a dirty thing as a carpet — not she) were scrubbed with soap and sand every morning, and her chairs bottomed with basket work, her pine mantelpiece and cupboard shelves had entirely lost the yellow hue peculiar to the wood, and vied with her carefully bleached window-curtains in whiteness. Now all this could not be accomplished without a vast amount of labor; and hence Mrs. Howe's cares, of which her husband had spoken so feelingly. Yet no one, who had once looked on the plump, rosy face and robust figure of the young wife, would fail to laugh at the idea of her being careworn.

Mrs. Howe soon began to love little Robert very dearly, though he kept her in constant fear by his carelessness, and every day she was heard to wonder what that boy would come to. If he attempted to bring the castor to the table he was sure to drop it; the meat always got burned when he was stationed to watch it; the wood that he cut was either too large or made into fine splinters; and when he milked, if the cow neglected to set her foot in the pail, Jowler, who was ever by his side in field, house or barn-yard, substituted his nose and paw, placing it in the condition of the country maid's in the spelling-book. Yet Robert was not an ungrateful lad; and when Mr. Howe talked seriously to him of his carelessness, he would make — oh, such firm resolves never, *never* to cause his kind benefactor another moment of trouble, that no one, could those resolves have been rendered visible, would have doubted his reformation. But, alas for Robert! no sooner did Jowler rub his cold nose against his hand, or little Hetty crow from the cradle, than the admonitory voice of his master was drowned in his own mirthful shout, and his admonitions entirely obliterated from memory. Mrs. Howe scolded and flattered by turns, now threatening to send him home, again raising her hand to give him a blow, which the

little fellow always contrived to dodge, and at other times laughing immoderately at the amusing nature of his blunders. If Robert could have been spoiled, this was, of all others, the very place for doing it; but somehow every influence over him seemed powerless either to sober or corrupt his heart. So it still remained a great mystery to Mrs. Howe and to Mr. Howe, and to some of the Howes' less interested neighbors, what that boy would come to at last. "There is *enough in him*," was a very common remark, "but —." Then followed an ominous shake of the head. Certainly Robert Flemming was not in a position to have his talents, if talents he had, understood and developed. Perhaps it was the position which shadowed his promise.

What an oddity is a country newspaper! — always retailing second-hand news that is news no longer, relating anecdotes that have been fifty times repeated, and reviving old worn-out tales which would otherwise go down to oblivion. And yet, somehow, this news is always worth hearing, these anecdotes are at least as witty as some of the new ones, and these tales are very apt to be sensible and moral. But one thing is certain — nowhere will you find better informed people — that is, those who better understand all the principal movements of the day, whether political, moral or religious, than the readers of a country newspaper. The reason may be that they have so little else to read. At any rate, that was why little Robert Flemming pored so untiringly over the two sheets which weekly found their way into Mr. Howe's dwelling. About the time the newspaper was expected to arrive, it was in vain that Mr. Howe issued his orders and Mrs. Howe scolded, in vain did Jowler jump and Hetty crow. Robert responded to each, but not heartily; he said, "I will, sir," to Mr. Howe; "Yes'em," to Mrs. Howe; twisted Jowler's collar about his unconscious hands till the poor dog was half choked; cried "Bo-peep" to Hetty through his fingers when his head was turned the other way, and, in the midst of the whole, darted off to the road to look for the post-boy.

Well," said Mrs. Howe, one day, when this had occurred

at precisely the moment when she was wanting a pail of water — “ Well, if this is n’t enough to wear out the patience of Job ! I don’t know what that boy will come to at last, but — ;” then followed a solemn shake of the head. “ He is the worst boy in the neighborhood, and I can’t bear any longer with him, I am sure I can’t. I wish all the newspapers were burnt up.”

“ I was just thinking,” was the quiet response, “ that the year will be out soon, and — ”

“ You don’t think of stopping the paper ? ”

“ It might be well to stop it for a quarter, for Robert is getting very troublesome, and we should neither of us like to part with him just now.”

“ Really, Eben Howe, I should n’t think that of you, after your grand notions about schooling and such like things. Why, do you think I would keep house without as much as one paper ? It’s but little time I get to read, to be sure, such a dog’s life I lead of it ; but I should be ashamed to own we were such heathen as not to take a newspaper.”

“ Well, what shall we do, Rachel ? ”

“ Do ? Why, it is pretty government that you have, I must say, to let a boy like that ride over you rough-shod ! I’d tie him to the bed-post, if I could n’t do anything else with him.”

“ I don’t know of anything that would be likely to please him better.”

“ Now, Eben, that is going a little too far. I know Robert’s faults as well as anybody, but it can’t be said that he is a lazy boy. He does twice as much as Joseph Smith, and Joe is four years older than he. No — no ; let Robert be what he may, he is industrious — I’ll say that for him.”

“ Yes, industrious enough when he takes the fit ; but look at him now ; ” and Mr. Howe pointed to the roadside, where Robert, perched upon the fence, was eagerly unfolding his damp paper.

This was the signal for an attack upon the boy ; and his capricious mistress wheeled about as readily as was her wont.

Robert obeyed her boisterous call, though rather hesitatingly ; and, being in the midst of a spirited description of a tiger hunt, he did not raise his eyes, but read as he walked slowly to the house.

"Come, go to work, you good-for-nothing blockhead !" exclaimed the vixen. "Do you suppose we are to give you a good home and clothe and feed you for nothing ?"

"Yes'em !" replied Robert, mechanically ; for the tiger had just turned about ready for a spring upon her pursuers, and the story had become intensely interesting.

This time Robert's art as a dodger failed, or it may be that he neglected to use it, for Mrs. Howe's hand came down certainly not very gently on his ear, which so surprised the absent-minded young gentleman that he gave a scream and a leap, alighting at last upon poor Jowler's paw. The yell of the dog, together with the instability of his footing, induced Robert to take another step, which brought him in contact with the cradle ; and the next moment he found himself on the other side, little Hetty kicking and screaming beside him, and Jowler nosing about and frolicking in the midst as though all this was to him rare sport. The entrance of a neighbor at this juncture was like slipping from the hands of the hangman to Master Robert, for Mrs. Howe was obliged to soothe the baby, and Mr. Howe to entertain the visitor. "I don't know what that boy will come to yet," was all he heard as he made his exit, grasping the unfortunate cause of all his difficulties with both hands.

Robert profited wonderfully by his three months at school ; and Mrs. Howe felt almost a mother's pride while listening to his praises. Yet, morning, noon and night, as regularly as the recurrence of his meals, came the scolding ; so that, in process of time, he became quite accustomed to it, and would have felt much surprise at its omission. But notwithstanding Robert gained honor in the district school, it would not balance the dishonor he gained out of it ; for was n't it he that coaxed the boys away to the pond to slide, the day they all fell in and got such a wetting ?—and was n't it he that

lamed Squire White's pony when he made the poor, awkward beast enact Bucephalus, to the terror as well as admiration of the whole school? To be sure, in the first case, he risked his own life and displayed as much presence of mind as ingenuity in saving his companions; and, in the other, he took untiring care of the injured limb till it was quite well again. But what had that to do with the matter? The mischief was done, and done by Robert, and everybody wondered what that shockingly bad, hare-brained boy would come to. But the worst of it was, they wondered what made Mr. Howe keep him—a wonder which, since Mr. Howe himself joined in it, was like to prove a serious affair to the young scapegrace. To be sure, he was always contriving improvements—some useful, some of them complete failures; but what did Mr. Howe want of a boy to make wind-mills, plant trees in the yard, find all the boys in the neighborhood in hand-sleds and balls, and ride the unbroken colt without a saddle? Robert was industrious, nobody could gainsay that; but *such* industry! He declared it was the dullest thing in the world to saw wood all day, unless he might be allowed to spoil the saw by diversions in favor of the line of beauty, which Robert knew even in babyhood was not a straight line; and picking stones in the meadow, when no opportunity was allowed him for building palaces and pyramids, was an employment he detested. Mr. Howe was of the opinion that boys should never think of anything but what they are bidden to do; and so Robert's extra services, particularly when they encroached upon the time that should have been devoted to other things, all went for nothing; yet he could not bear to send the boy away, for he was the best-hearted little fellow in the world, and in one case, if no other, showed that he could be careful. Little Hetty, no longer a baby, followed him about as constantly as did old Jowler; and carefully indeed did Master Robert guard her; carefully did he lift her over the mud, finding a safe spot for her tiny foot on the dry ground, or seating her on the soft moss while he gathered buttercups and daisies for her; and then he led her gently by the hand, and

pulled down the berry bushes that she might pick the fruit with her own fingers, while he warned her against the thorns, and drew her little red blanket about her shoulders lest she should suffer from the cool air.

But the time at last arrived when Robert Flemming was to take leave of his kind master and benefactor. To be sure he was not *twenty-one*, but the farmer concluded as he had set his heart on going, there was no use in detaining him, though the sacrifice was much greater than he had anticipated. "But it is my mind, Robert, that you had better stick to farming," he remarked, shaking his head gravely; "it is the most honorable and honest of all callings, and can never disgrace anybody."

Mrs. Howe thought him an ungrateful wretch, to forsake the house that had sheltered him so many years; talked pathetically of the unsatisfying nature of the world that he was going out to try, and at last concluded by a burst of tears and a speech, in which were mingled so much invective, affection and sad apprehensions for the future, that even Robert, accustomed as he was to her moods, felt confused, and could only say, "You will get a better boy, Mrs. Howe. I have made you a great deal of trouble."

From little Hetty, as she was still called, the parting was yet more difficult. Hetty had all her mother's spirit, but the disagreeable example continually before her eyes had prevented her from displaying it in the same manner, and her look of sorrowful reproach went to Robert's heart. He knew how sad his little favorite would be if he left her alone, and for a moment his resolution was shaken. Why should he go away from the friends that loved him dearly, that had befriended him in his worse than orphan state? But Robert hesitated only a moment. It was no idle caprice that took him away, but there was a necessity in the case; his future prospects, his personal independence, were involved in it. So he led his little playmate to the top of the hill that looked down upon the neighboring village, and there, promising that he would see her very, very often, and would

always bring her something nice from the town, he kissed her forehead, eyes and lips, over and over again; then, dashing away the tears that he thought quite unmanly in a youth of sixteen, he trudged steadily down the hill, not trusting himself to look back, for he knew that the child would maintain her position there till he was quite out of sight.

In choosing a profession, Robert Flemming was true to his early preference; and with the flattering credentials furnished him by Mr. Howe and his old schoolmaster, it was not difficult for him to gain admission into a printing establishment, where he could read of tiger hunts and other wondrous things to his heart's content. We have no inclination to follow our hero through his five years of apprenticeship—not dull, oh, no;—time never hung heavily on Robert Flemming's hands; but sometimes laborious, and never without its peculiar trials. The indignities to which a sensitive nature is subjected by its inferiors, when fortune obliges them to come in contact, are not borne without an effort. But at last his term of service expired, and then, penniless, but by no means friendless, he had another long probation to undergo ere he could feel himself quite a man among other men. But one truth had been indelibly impressed on the mind of the boy by his sensible master, which many young men of promise have been ruined by not understanding. Young Flemming knew that in this every-day world, few could step at once into fortune—that *persevering industry is the only sure ladder to preferment.*

A country wedding is an affair of importance; and when it was noised throughout a certain neighborhood that “that wild boy, Robert, had returned to marry Hetty,” it created as great a sensation as the arrival of a foreign *danseuse* would have produced in other circles. The young men thought the handsome Miss Hester Howe, heiress to all her father's broad lands, very foolish to throw herself away in such a manner; the young misses pursed up their mouths, both pretty and ugly, and declared that these proud folks never made out very well, and to their minds she deserved nothing better; while

the old people all agreed that it was a "pretty risky business." And so it might have been, but our idler had learned something of himself, and of the responsibilities attendant upon *living*; and a change had come over his mind and habits. And the Howes acted with becoming independence on the occasion — Mrs. Howe even going so far as to give some of the most impertinent of the meddlers "a piece of her mind;" and the wedding went off at last to the admiration of everybody. Robert Flemming's cheerful, manly face and commanding figure, did much to turn the current of *public opinion* in his favor; and the hearty grasp of the hand with which he met his old acquaintances, together with the political information that he furnished Squire White, who had not seen the late papers, completed his conquest over their hearts. Busily wagged many a tongue on the morning of the wedding; though, strange as it may seem, nearly everybody had foreseen how matters would turn out, from the very first, particularly those who had thrown up their indignant hands the highest, and wondered the loudest what that boy would come to.

"And now you are one of us in earnest," said Mr. Howe, wringing the tough hand of the bridegroom; "and I shall be almost as proud to call you my son as I should if you had been a farmer."

"And I as proud to call you father as though you were a king," returned the young man, warmly.

"President, you mean—say president!" exclaimed old Squire White, warmly, who, from having been a "*seventy-sixer*," thought that kings should be classed with "other pirates and robbers," and never let slip an opportunity to lift up his voice against them. "It's a shame for American boys to be talking after this sort of the oppressor who sets his heel on —"

"But presidents and presidents' sons should n't be proud, you know; that would be anti-republican," interrupted Robert Flemming, good-humoredly, "and so the comparison would n't be in point."

"Proud!—no, no, that they should n't," muttered the old man, while Robert turned again to his father-in-law.

"It shall be the study of my life to repay the kindness shown to an untaught, friendless boy, who, without you——"

"Would have done well, Robert; I see it, I know it now, though there was a time when I used to have my fears of what you would come to at last."

"Now, Eben Howe, do get out of the way!" exclaimed a shrill voice close at hand; "how can the dear boy speak to his mother while you stand mumbling and fumbling at this rate, owning yourself the half-hearted man that you are, never seeing an inch ahead. It is well that everybody was n't so blind Robert, or else——" The old lady finished the sentence by a knowing glance towards the bevy of peony-cheeked damsels surrounding her daughter. "And yet here you stand talking with all the old men, and shaking hands with everybody, as though you had n't a word for your mother."

"My mother truly—doubly so!" said the young man, imprinting a hearty kiss upon the cheek, which, although somewhat withered, now glowed with the excitement of the moment; "and the very kindest of mothers have you been to me, from the moment of my frolic with Jowler (poor old Jowler! it seemed like losing a human friend when he died) up to the present time."

"Ay—ay, so you say; but it is little you act as though you thought you had ever received the least kindness from the poor creature you have come to rob of all she ever had to love."

The raised tone of voice could not fail to reach the ears of the bride, and *such* an entreating look! It might have melted a sterner heart than Mrs. Howe's—that is, if stern hearts were furnished with eyes to see it with.

"I have certainly caused you no small degree of trouble," Robert Flemming began, but he was interrupted.

"No—no, you never made any trouble, Robert, not the

least ; but I do think you might just come and live with us on the farm, where there 's thousands to support us all —— ”

“ Mother — mother,” whispered the bride, touching her arm with a finger all in a quiver, “ mother, don't ; everybody is hearing you ; don't, I entreat ! ”

“ And what if everybody is hearing me ? What have I said to be ashamed of ? I say there 's thousands for us all, and it 's a shame, and a sin, and a disgrace, for Robert Flemming —— ”

“ But, mother dear, that has been all settled, you know,” again interposed the bride, in a tremulous whisper.

“ Yes, I know it has been all settled ; but who settled it, Hetty Howe — Mistress Hetty Flemming, as I suppose I must say after this — who settled it, and —— ”

“ *We* will unsettle it, Rachel,” said Mr. Howe, with a glance which added, “ What a pity nobody but me knows how to manage her ! ” — “ we will unsettle it, and Robert shall live with us *willy nilly*.”

“ Shall ! you don't mean *shall*, I hope ? Robert has always had his own way, and I 'm the last one to interfere with his doings, though he does take the heart out of me and leave the old house desolate. It is a sad thing — a sad —— . There, the very papers of cake I had put up for the Thompsons ! I never ! The idea of Becky's bringing such a troop of children with her ! ”

Year on year had passed, and each, as is the custom with years, left a token ; a great one with the great, and a simpler one with the lowly. Even old Time is an aristocrat. A church, a new school-house, and a cluster of dwelling-houses had been erected in the neighborhood of Mr. Howe ; while another Robert Flemming, as roguish, as heedless, and as fond of newspapers as the first, had grown almost as tall as his father, and so undertaken the management of his grandfather's farm. Everything was changed. Even a new generation of beings had sprung up around the old farmer and his still wrangling but kind-hearted spouse.

It was a bitingly cold night. Ugh! what a shiver the swinging of a door sent over pleasant fire-lit rooms! how thankful thinking people were for the roof that reflected back the blaze upon them! But the fireside, lavishly comfortable as it was, was not all powerful. Affairs of importance were to be discussed, and so all the men in the neighborhood were collected in the school-house. A thin-faced man had taken the chair, and a fair-haired one beside him was about unfolding a paper, probably fraught with weighty matters, when the door opened, and in hobbled old Squire White. He held in his hand a crushed newspaper, his long, silvery hair, which was usually braided over his bald crown, was straggling about his shoulders and floating off on every puff of air; his spectacles were across his forehead instead of his nose, and the Sunday hat of his grandson was stuck jauntily (as hats too small must be) on one side of his head.

"Hurrah, boys!" exclaimed the old man, tottering towards the middle of the room, and flourishing his cane with an arm not yet quite nerveless; "returns from all the principal counties, and the 'lection is sartin. Three cheers for Robert Flemming, the best governor that ever set foot in York state. The blood of '76 is a-stirring yet, I can tell ye, boys! Why don't ye shout? Hurra—a—a!" and as the successive peals died away, the old man raised his palsied hands and exclaimed, "Well, the ways of Providence *are* marvellous! Who would have thought when little Bobby Flemming lamed my pony, that he would ever come to this?"

It is possible that some knowing politician may attempt to dispute the accuracy of my veritable history; but I defy his ingenuity, except with regard to the name of Robert Flemming. There I will plead guilty to romancing, it being only a veil hung by the hand of propriety over one as widely known and dearly loved as any on whom the Empire state has ever bestowed her honors.

TO MY MOTHER.

[WRITTEN AFTER A SHORT ABSENCE.]

GIVE me my old seat, mother,
 With my head upon thy knee ;
 I've passed through many a changing scene
 Since thus I sat by thee.
 Oh ! let me look into thine eyes —
 Their meek, soft, loving light
 Falls like a gleam of holiness
 Upon my heart to-night.

I've not been long away, mother ;
 Few suns have rose and set,
 Since last the tear-drop on thy cheek
 My lips in kisses met ;
 Tis but a little time, I know,
 But very long it seems,
 Though every night I come to thee,
 Dear mother, in my dreams.

The world has kindly dealt, mother,
 By the child thou lov'st so well ;
 Thy prayers have circled round her path,
 And 't was their holy spell
 Which made that path so clearly bright,
 Which strewed the roses there ;
 Which gave the light, and cast the balm
 On every breath of air.

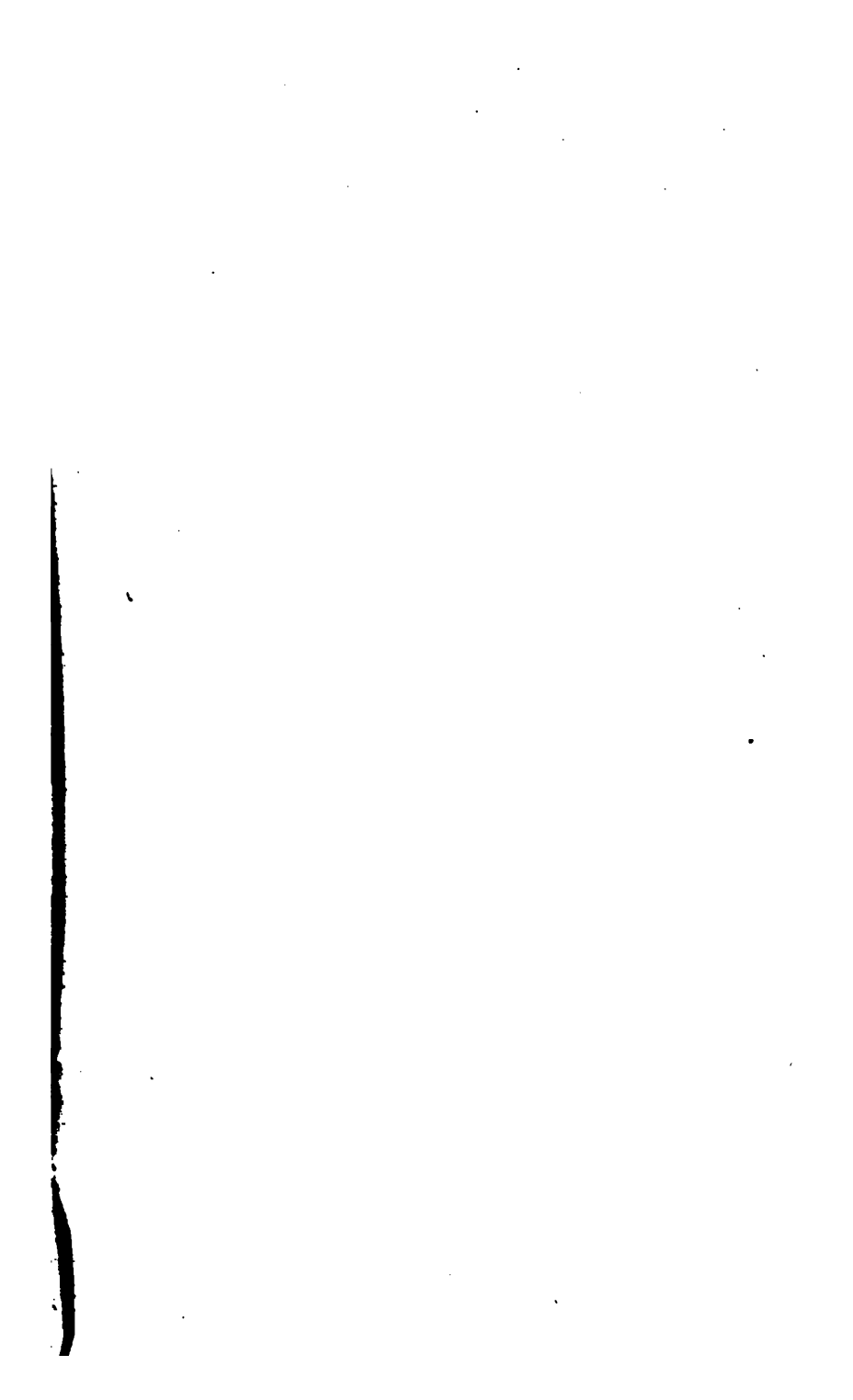
I bear a happy heart, mother ;
 A happier never beat ;
 And even now new buds of hope
 Are bursting at my feet.

Oh, mother ! life may be "a dream,"
But if such *dreams* are given,
While at the portal thus we stand,
What are the *truths* of heaven ?

I bear a happy heart, mother ;
Yet, when fond eyes I see,
And hear soft tones and winning words,
I ever think of thee.
And then, the tear my spirit weeps
Unbidden fills my eye ;
And like a homeless dove, I long
Unto thy breast to fly.

Then, I am very sad, mother,
I'm very sad and lone ;
Oh ! there's no heart, whose inmost fold
Opes to me like thine own !
Though sunny smiles wreath blooming lips,
While love-tones meet my ear ;
My mother, one fond glance of thine
Were thousand times more dear.

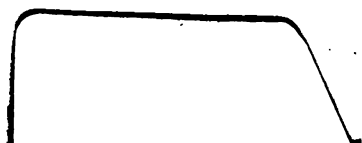
Then, with a closer clasp, mother,
Now hold me to thy heart ;
I'd feel it beating 'gainst my own
Once more before we part.
And, mother, to this love-lit spot,
When I am far away,
Come oft — *too oft* thou canst not come ! —
And for thy darling pray.













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